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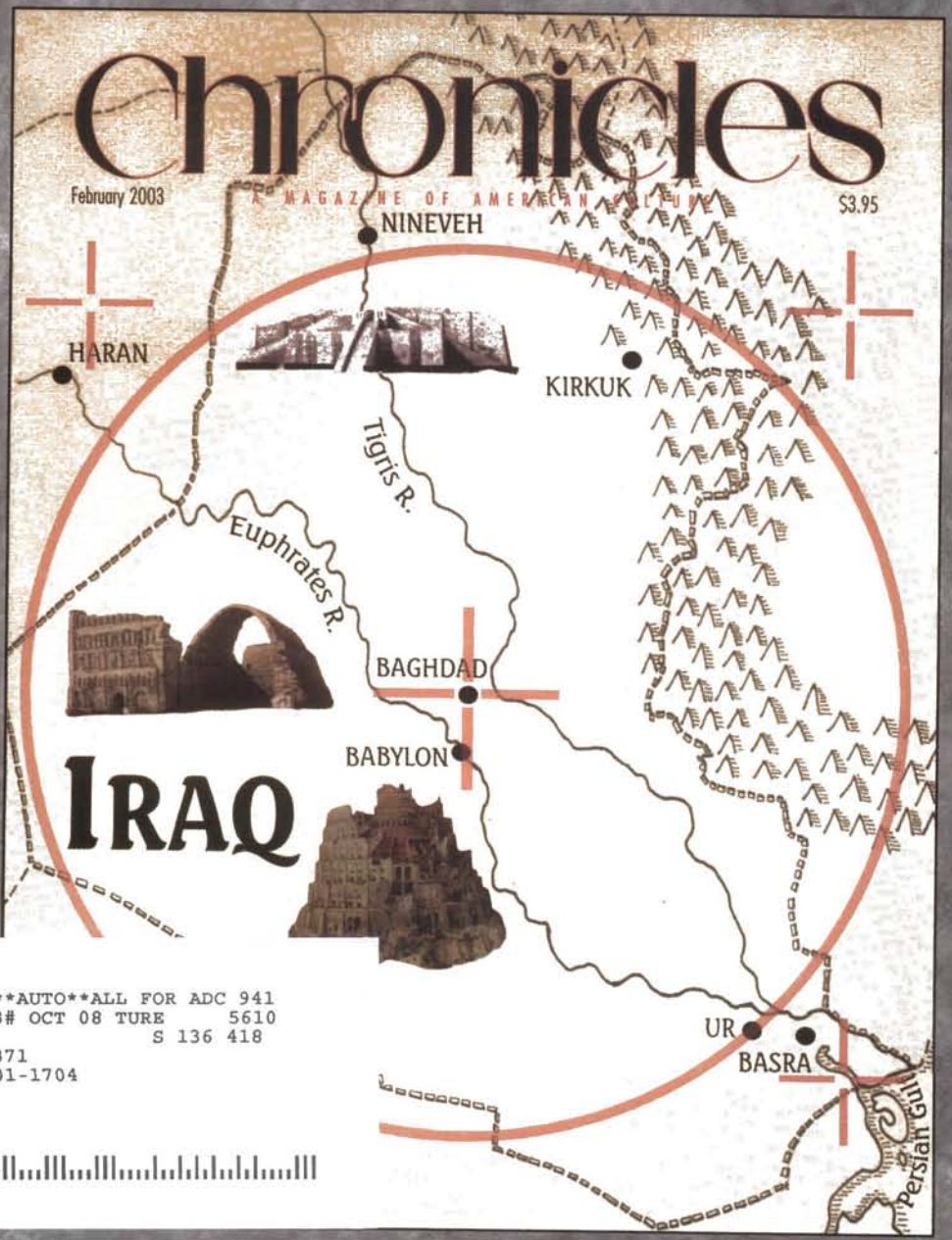

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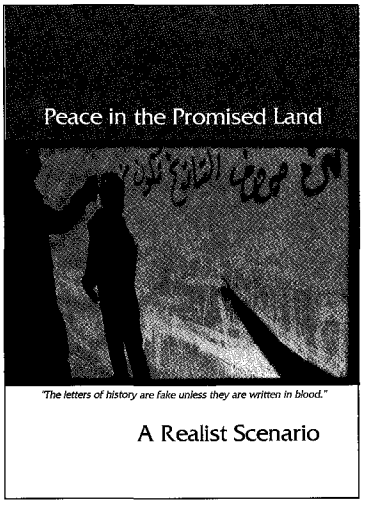
The purpose of this book is to rekindle debate in the United States about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. . . . It is not normal that the discourse on the dispute is far more dynamic, varied, and intelligent in other countries—including Israel—than in America.

—From the Foreword

Peace in the Promised Land: A Realist Scenario

edited by Srdja Trifkovic

featuring chapters by Middle Eastern experts, *Chronicles* editors, and scholars Thomas Fleming, Michael Stenton, Leon Hadar, Srdja Trifkovic, Aaron D. Wolf, Paul Gottfried, Wayne Allensworth, David A. Hartman, Doug Bandow, Stephen B. Presser, and Ivan Eland, as well as color maps, source documents, and a selected bibliography



Few issues in American foreign policy evoke more emotion than U.S support for Israel. With the death of Yasser Arafat and a new centrist coalition in Israel, however, it is time to reconsider the question, "What is the American interest in this conflict?"

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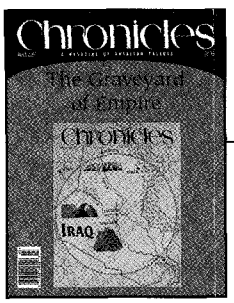

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On the Founders

In his review of Gordon S. Wood's *Revolutionary Characters* ("Founders, Keepers," January), James O. Tate avers that "we need to recover a vital connection to the spirit of the Founding Fathers . . ." He notes that Wood identifies that spirit, but nowhere in the review does he describe it. That spirit was anti-Catholic—a marriage of rationalism, naturalism, and secularism, the bitter fruits of Protestant and Enlightenment ideas, because of their redefinition of human nature and freedom.

Why should I, a Catholic born in America, want to reconnect with Thomas Jefferson, who, in a letter to John Adams on April 11, 1823, wrote, "And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding"?

Going back to Washington, Franklin (both Freemasons), and the rest of their ilk will not resuscitate America. We must divorce ourselves from adoration of those revolutionaries and return to Him Who declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life." It is only in this way that we can become His temporal instruments for the restoration of the good, the beautiful, and the true in our land.

—Jerry Meng
Imlay City, MI

Professor Tate Replies:

I agree with the burden of Mr. Meng's letter: There is a truth there about the anti-Catholic spirit, in a negative sense, and the Christian spirit, in a positive one, though he may be a bit confused about restoring what we never had. But then, I never said—nor did Gordon Wood—that the Founding Fathers were great theologians. Rather, he and I see them as gentlemen who had keen political insight. Although we need to reconnect with that disinterested political insight because we don't have any, Wood implied that we could not do so, and I explicitly agreed with him. Was it a politician who said, "My Kingdom is not of this world"?

On Favorites

For many years, I have subscribed to and enjoyed your excellent magazine. I always immensely enjoy the writing of Thomas Fleming, Roger McGrath, and George McCartney. Dr. Fleming's January *Perspective*, "Two Oinks for Democracy," was superb. Dr. McGrath's "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" (*Vital Signs*) was likewise superb, as was Dr. McCartney's review of the films *Borat* and *Babel* ("Cross-Cultural Follies," *In the Dark*). Always, as expected, these three never fail to knock out the very best in writing skills and wordsmithery.

I subscribe to several other publications but never fail to pick up and read *Chronicles* first, pushing aside such magazines as *National Review* to reach for my favorite.

Thank you for constantly putting out such a fine magazine every month.

—Ralph Walker-Willis
San Jacinto, CA

After seeing your December issue, "Christendom Under Siege," I can only say how refreshing it is to read a publication in the Old Right tradition that discusses the collapse of our cultural and moral values instead of cheerleading for the next misguided, imperialistic war and rationalizing the impoverishment of this great nation and the reverse wealth transfer from the middle class to the rich, perpetrated by our corrupt "leaders" through the twin frauds of "free trade" and open borders.

What a blessing to read articles such as Dr. Thomas Fleming's "*Jihad*'s Fifth Column" (*Perspective*), which sadly notes the missed opportunities to deal with the Ottoman Muslim onslaught, thanks to foolish bickering within Christendom and the selfishness and shortsighted pettiness of many monarchs and other leaders.

Every article by Dr. Srdja Trifkovic on Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the worldwide Islamic resurgence should be required reading at our misguided and incompetent White House, State Department, and CIA—who seem hell-bent on their mission to revive the Cold War and who are incapable of distinguishing Putin from Stalin.

—Diogenes P. Kekatos
Forest Hills, NY

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Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic

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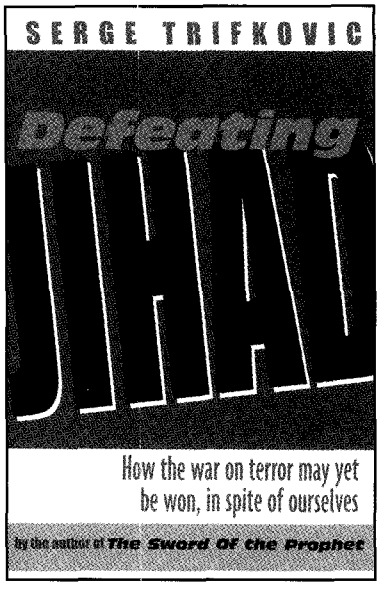
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—Jeffrey Rubin, editor, Conservative Book Club

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by Leon Hadar

Shooting Elephants With Our Man in Baghdad

A college professor who is planning to teach a course on imperialism contacted me recently, asking for my recommendations for the course's reading list. If I had only one item to suggest for his class on empire and its discontents, it would not be an essay in history, political science, or economics. Instead, I would propose that he assign George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant."

In case you haven't read or don't remember it, Orwell's story (written in 1936) is a tale told by an imperial policeman stationed in British-controlled Burma in 1926. The narrator is being sent to a bazaar to help tame a rampaging elephant that has trampled and killed local residents. When he arrives at the scene, the elephant seems docile. But the British policeman, who is supposed to be in charge, finds himself trapped in the expectations of the natives, who want him to shoot the elephant—which is what he ends up doing.

The message that the anti-imperialist Orwell tries to convey in this semi-autobiographical story is that the empire doesn't just enslave those under its authority; those who control and serve it are also caught in the machinery of repression and cannot escape it. They are the victims of imperialism as much as—if not more than—the natives they dominate.

As the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" puts it, "I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing. I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British." He felt trapped, if not enslaved, knowing that "I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible." In a way, "I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind," forced to impose strict laws by shooting the elephant. He concludes that "when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys."

The U.S. occupation of Iraq has yet to acquire the characteristics of the British imperial project in Burma (or, for that matter, in Iraq). But the most recent chapter in the American misadventure in Mesopotamia, the so-called Surge—that is, the decision by that Emperor for Poor People, George W. Bush, to dispatch an additional 21,500 to Baghdad (and the Anbar province) to help the Shiite-controlled government to shoot elephants (oops, sorry, Sunnis)—has all the making of the kind of moral predicament in which Orwell's policeman found himself 90 years ago, where one forfeits his own freedom by ruling over others.

Bush was very, very excited, as I recall, after he had met with Iraq's new prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, for the first time in the Green Zone in Baghdad. "I wanted to hear whether or not he was stuck in the past or willing to think about the future," Bush told reporters. "And I came away with a very positive impression." Maliki, Bush said back then, "is a no-nonsense guy that talks about priorities and how he's going to achieve the priorities. And that's comforting."

And now it seems that Bush is the only one who is still taking much comfort in Maliki. Most of his political and military advisors, with the exception of the few surviving members of his new warriors at the American Enterprise Institute and the *Weekly Standard* (who helped draw up the outline of the Surge strategy), have lost their faith in Maliki and the Shiite clerics and warlords and gang leaders who surround him. It's not just that the Shiite leader has failed to quell the sectarian violence that contributed to the deaths of more than 34,000 Iraqis in 2006 (according to the United Nations), as well as nearly 600 U.S. soldiers since he took over in May: Maliki, Our Man in Baghdad, on whom Bush's hopes (fantasies?) are dependent, has been operating like—to use political-science lingo—a "rational actor" who is aware that his political (and physical) survival depends on maintaining strong ties with the radical Shiite players in Iraq (which assumes that there are any "nonradical" Shiite players).

The Iraqi prime minister was put into power with the support of Shiite radical Muqtada al-Sadr's political bloc (after those free democratic elections) and has continued to sabotage U.S. attempts to target Sadr's Mahdi Army militia. During the most recent U.S. efforts to stabilize Baghdad, he could not or would not provide enough Iraqi troops to make the plan work. And there was his handling of Saddam Hussein's execution, which was marred by Shiite taunts of the former dictator and pro-Sadr chants. Indeed, serious experts on Iraq note that Maliki, who spent almost a decade in exile in Iran and Syria in the 1980's, and his Dawa Party are seen by many as an Iranian political satellite that wants to turn Iraq into a Shiite theocracy under Tehran's sphere of influence.

Maliki's supporters insist that he is a "pragmatic" figure. But Middle-East-style "pragmatism" is the kind that Don Corleone practices: You are permitted and even encouraged to form *ad hoc* alliances with "strangers," but, at the end of the day, your allegiance is to the Family, to those with whom you share "blood." From that perspective, Sadr is Family, and Bush is not. Maliki and his Shiite buddies view their relationship with the Americans as a one-night stand and the American troops as their foreign mercenaries who, they hope, will help them kill as many Sunnis as possible before being forced by a revolted American public to return home.

Not unlike Orwell's imperial enforcer, Bush and his troops have become hostage to the sectarian and personal interests of Shiite clerics and militia killers. They will find themselves embroiled in a bloody civil war on the side of the allies of Iran—which, according to Bush, poses a long-term threat to U.S. interests. It's a lose-lose situation that would probably sound familiar to the tragic figure who shot an elephant in Burma in 1926.

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WRONG FROM THE BEGINNING

As the editorial director of *Antiwar.com*, I have been in a good position to chart the failed predictions and laughable prognostications of the War Party—and, while it may be in somewhat bad taste to say, "I told you so," as the latest news indicates that we have surpassed 3,000 American dead (not to mention 34,000 dead Iraqi civilians in 2006 alone), one cannot help but tote up the scorecard and note that the laptop bombardiers, who confidently projected a "cakewalk," are batting zero. On the other hand, even as the "mainstream" media and the neocons were hailing our glorious victory in the first weeks of the war, my March 24, 2003, column—presciently titled "A No-Winner: The first disastrous week of war foretells a dire future"—pretty much hit the nail on the head: "For the first few days, we saw only sanitized images of a clean, hassle-free war, amid hints of a winged victory beckoning in the near future. But that is fast giving way to the gritty reality of the quagmire we are falling into. The 'cakewalk' that Richard Perle and his fellow chickenhawks confidently predicted is turning into a forced march into Hell."

Not that you had to be Nostradamus to see what was coming. And that's what gets me about this whole bloody episode: How could they *not* have known? I mean, the U.S. government employs a myriad of analysts, diplomats, spooks, and high muckety-mucks to shape policy and construct likely scenarios in the foreign-policy sphere, spending millions—nay, billions—to guide the U.S. ship of state through stormy international waters. So why didn't they see the Iraq disaster coming?

It is utterly baffling to hear the expressions of shock and surprise from U.S.-government officials and their Amen Corner in the media now that Iraq is being torn apart by a sectarian civil war. All that highfalutin presidential rhetoric about how everyone yearns for freedom, and how we're igniting a "fire in the mind" with our efforts, rings hollow when we behold what the current government of Iraq has wrought: Shiite death squads, hundreds of bodies stacked up in the morgues every week, and an emerging alliance with Iran that bodes ill for U.S. interests in the region. Given the ethno-religious composition of Iraq, what did anyone expect? After all, they can't say they weren't warned. As I pointed out in my *Behind the Headlines* column of December 15, 2003, "Resistance to the American occupation is now shifting from the infamous 'Sunni triangle' to the Shi'ite south, where Iranian influence is spreading." The party militias, I averred, would soon become a major problem: "Before the invasion, SCIRI officials predicted that they might one day fight the Americans just as they fought Saddam, and the hour may be fast approaching."

As for the original rationale for going to war, we at *Antiwar.com* always knew this was a mere pretext to invade and conquer a country that had never attacked or threatened the United States. When Colin Powell supposedly "delivered the goods" in his now-infamous speech to the United Nations detailing Saddam's alleged WMDs, my February 3, 2003, column couldn't have been clearer or—in retrospect—more correct: "I don't believe a word of it." Powell lived to regret that farrago of lies, cherry-picked half-truths, and outright fabrications compiled by Scooter Libby and his neocon elves in the White House.

As far back as February 2001, we were warning that Iraq's fabled nuclear-weapons program was a myth promulgated by war proponents: "The myth of the Saddam Bomb will never die. No matter how much UN nuclear inspectors praise Iraq—as the Associated Press headline put it—for its full cooperation, the War Party is determined to keep this one alive. The only problem for them is that, each time it is raised, and then dismissed as arrant nonsense, the myth of the Saddam Bomb seems less credible."

Today, when the Vice President's chief of staff is on trial for crimes committed in the course of pushing the lie that Iraq had or was about to acquire nuclear weapons, what seems incredible is that anyone believed the War Party's transparent lies.

What seems particularly disturbing is the complete inability of the military establishment to foresee the rise of an insurgency against the occupation. For many months, Donald Rumsfeld was telling us that the increasing number of attacks were just the fading efforts of the last remnants of resistance, the work of a few "dead-enders," and one wonders why this huge mistake was made. Perhaps the administration judged the Iraqis by Western standards and assumed them to be just as decadent, and as unlikely to resist, as the typical 21st-century American—who is, after all, standing idly by as our constitutional liberties are dissolved in the all-consuming fires of the "War on Terror."

—*Justin Raimondo*

DOMESTIC DISTRACTION

President George W. Bush's sixth State of the Union Address was his best so far, rhetorically speaking. As befits a President in deep trouble, his body language was that of a beta male, and he smiled demurely. His tone was calm and conciliatory, at times to the point of pleading. To the uninitiated, Mr. Bush came across as a "regular guy." Observed in isolation from the issues at stake, he remains more likable, and his presentation more ostensibly credible, than anything his Democratic detractors can offer.

Nonetheless, the oration Mr. Bush gave on January 23 was flawed, for three reasons: It was mendacious in its stated priorities; it was inaccurate in its proposed solutions; and it was fundamentally deceitful on the one issue that overshadows all others—Iraq.

To focus the speech on domestic issues at a time when the country is facing the worst foreign-policy disaster since Vietnam was eccentric at best. Yet the President chose to devote most of his time to traditionally Democratic issues: reducing gasoline consumption and expanding health-insurance coverage. He suggested solutions to both that seem tailor-made to resonate with the public at large and to gain the approval of congressional Democrats. Tax cuts, a balanced budget, energy conservation, and healthcare reform are all fine and dandy by themselves. Mr. Bush's attempt to change the subject of Iraq, however, is pathetic.

In his speech, Mr. Bush failed on the domestic policy that is most worthy of our attention: immigration. Within weeks rather than months, he is likely to put together a bipartisan agenda for "immigration reform" (*i.e.*, amnesty for up to 18

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million illegal immigrants from Mexico and other distinctly un-American places) that will gain support from his congressional opponents. He may not realize, however, that even opening the floodgates would not get him more than a pat on the back from the left.

No solution to the mess Bush created in Iraq will be supported by the people who dislike him with gusto—and there are at least as many of them today as there were those who hated Clinton's guts a decade ago. To put it succinctly, Bush haters want him to fail in Iraq more than they want America to succeed in disentangling herself. What Pelosi & Co. see as Bush's well-deserved comeuppance will come back to haunt all of us—Democrats included.

Bush paid polite respects to the new masters of both houses (particularly to Speaker Pelosi), but, when he finally came to Iraq, the message was far from bipartisan: There's a war to be won, and victory is possible. Victory is not probable, however, and the net effect of Mr. Bush's undermanned Surge in Baghdad and western Anbar will be to make the domestic playing field even more friendly to the Democrats.

Bush's proposals on Iraq are neither realistic nor strategically significant. A mere 20,000-strong reinforcement can alter the equation in a neighborhood or two in Baghdad or western Anbar. But to "win the war" in Mr. Bush's sense (leaving behind a democratic, pro-American, anti-jihadist, stable, unified Iraq), a million GIs would be needed for at least a decade.

The annual "State of the Union" address, as demonstrated by Mr. Bush's latest performance, is simply a highly publicized opportunity for an incumbent President to give a self-serving homily designed to improve his ratings. It should either be privatized and turned into a network special with a six-figure price tag or be abolished.

For many decades, the State of the Union Address has had little to do with the real condition of the Republic—her true economic and political strength, her culture, her faith—and everything to do with the agenda of the Duopoly of which Washington is the capital, and the world, the oyster. As theater and as a concept, it is reminiscent of the Supreme Soviet, *circa* 1937. As an institution, it is superfluous, embarrassing, and eminently worthy of extinction.

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

THE CONSERVATIVE STRIKES BACK

The Democrats picked Jim Webb to offer their response to the President's State of the Union Address for the same reason they anointed him to face Republican Sen. George Allen in the November 2006 election: his opposition to the war in Iraq, which is bolstered by his surpassing valor in Vietnam.

The risible aspect of Webb's sudden political ascendancy is that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans understood Webb during the campaign, and they don't understand him now. The Republicans tried to portray Webb as a leftist for the same reason Democrats think he is one: their obsession with the war in Iraq and their fantasy that anyone who opposes the war must favor "marriage" for homosexuals.

An Allen campaign advertisement suggested as much, but the fact remains that, in the race for Virginia senator, the visceral conservative won. Of the two men who addressed the nation on January 23, the liberal spoke from the House floor. The conservative replied.

More interesting than Webb's laconic answer, however, is Webb himself. In a campaign profile of Webb in the *Weekly Standard*, writer Andrew Ferguson called Webb a "blood-and-soil conservative," which no one seemed to grasp despite Webb's explaining himself in novels and his nonfiction history, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*. Observed Ferguson: "All his ideas are reactionary."

Indeed. *Born Fighting* is not only a paean to the Confederacy but an indictment of the cultural Marxists who declared war on middle-class, white Americans in the 1960's. Ferguson begins his piece with a quote from Webb's book: "The culture so dramatically symbolized by the Southern redneck [is] the greatest inhibitor of the plans of the activist Left and the cultural Marxists for a new kind of society altogether. . . . [Rednecks] are the greatest obstacles to what might be called the collectivist taming of America, symbolized by the edicts of political correctness. And for the last fifty years the Left has been doing everything in its power to sue them, legislate against their interests, mock them in the media, isolate them as idiosyncratic, and publicly humiliate their traditions in order to make them, at best, irrelevant to America's future growth."

To this, Ferguson replied, "Yowie."

At the end of *Born Fighting*, Webb dissects the political, cultural, and intellectual elites and their war against American culture in terms that would sound familiar to readers of *Chronicles*: "The most visible fault line between the people of this culture and those who so adamantly shape modern America's intellectual and political agenda began during the turmoil of the civil rights movement and continues today in a variety of related issues."

For Webb, *Born Fighting* was nothing new. In 1990, he gave an inspiring oration at the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery. In 2000, he called affirmative action "a permeating state-sponsored racism that is as odious as the Jim Crow laws it sought to countermand." He even named his son after Robert E. Lee. One wonders why the Southern Poverty Law Center did not come out for Allen. Hilariously enough, Democrat activists smelled something but could only tell Ferguson they planned to "educate" Webb. A few Democrats understood Webb, but again, their chief concern was the war in Iraq. Webb opposed it; that was good enough.

The irony of it all is that Allen was the liberal. Granted, the Democrats roasted Allen for his Confederate sympathies, the "Macaca" remark, and allegedly playing pranks on blacks and using the "*n*-word" in his youth at the University of Virginia, but Webb escaped any serious condemnation for his views. Allen the legislator wanted the Yankee Leviathan to cure every imaginable societal ill, and he even sponsored the "Pool and Spa Safety Act" to protect kiddies from accidental drowning. He did nothing to return government to its constitutional mooring. He was known as a conservative only because he backed the Bush Imperium and opposed homosexual "marriage," hardly a radical position in Virginia.

Allen enlisted female Naval Academy grads and others to call Webb a misogynist because of his writings (for which Webb apologized) attacking the feminization of the military. In other words, the alleged conservative ran to the left of Webb on one of the most important cultural issues of our time: women in combat.

In delivering the Democratic response to President Bush, in which he spoke about overpaid corporate executives, lost jobs, and the reckless expenditure of American blood and treasure in Iraq, Webb touched on the political and cultural theme of *Born Fighting*. To Webb, it was personal, and not just because of

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his book. Webb's son, unlike the Bush Twins, is fighting in Iraq.

The struggle of Webb's rednecks against the elites in *Born Fighting* foreshadowed his battle against Allen and Bush and their ilk—the rootless, plutocratic oligarchs who amass power and wealth by exploiting the fierce, proud patriotism of this country's Webbs in war, then dispossess them economically and culturally by advancing the interests of global corporate elites and by helping cultural leftists wage unremitting war against their children in school and their ancestors in history books.

No wonder Webb snubbed Bush when the President met with new legislators and inquired after Webb's son. "That's between me and my boy," the senator-elect grumbled. Columnist George Will, avatar of bespectacled, bow-tied "conservatives" everywhere, called him a "boor," which also harks back to Webb's cultural theme: Pasty-faced elitists like Will think guys like Webb are slack-jawed bumpkins. Maybe, but Webb began manhood by graduating from the Naval Academy and earning the Navy Cross. Will schlepped paste pots for Bill Buckley.

Given Webb's stardom, we have to wonder whether he contemplates higher office. One hint? His *BornFighting.com* website now represents his Born Fighting Political Action Committee, and everyone knows what those do: raise money. Once he measures Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, the latter being one of those cultural Marxists who have long tried to dispossess and delegitimize Webb's people, he may run for president. If he outwits the Democratic intellectual and cultural elites to win the nomination, the Republicans are doomed.

—*R. Cort Kirkwood*

OBITER DICTA

We are pleased to announce that, with this issue, **Catharine Savage Brosman**, professor *emerita* of French at Tulane University and honorary research professor at the University of Sheffield, has taken on the duties of poetry editor for *Chronicles*. She has published numerous works of poetry and prose, including her latest, *Range of Light*, which is due from LSU Press this month.

This year marks the bicentennial of the birth of **Robert E. Lee**, not long ago a hero to nearly all Americans. President Eisenhower sang Lee's praises, and President Truman had Lee's portrait in his library. Like so many other good American things, Lee has been subject more recently to trashing by the p.c. commissars. *Chronicles*' corresponding editor **Donald Livingston** and contributing editor **Clyde Wilson** are among the scheduled speakers at a program on April 28 in Arlington, Virginia, that will redress the balance: "Robert E. Lee: Hero or Traitor?" Lee's role in the issues of the Late Unpleasantness, as well as his military leadership, character, and Christianity, will be addressed by such writers as Kent Masterson Brown, Thomas DiLorenzo, John J. Dwyer, and Thomas Moore. Details are available in an advertisement in last month's issue of *Chronicles*.

Our poet this month is **Peter Hunt**, a widely published essayist and critic who sits on the editorial board of the *Chesterton Review*. His poetry has appeared in various journals and magazines.

Our cover and interior art are provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

Additional interior art is provided by **Nicholas Garrie**. Mr. Garrie, who works in a variety of media, hails from Rockford.

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by Thomas Fleming

If Pigs Could Fly

The day after Christmas 2006, the U.S.-military death toll in Iraq overtook and then surpassed the total number of Americans killed on September 11, 2001. Some Democrats, even before the symbolic number was reached, were calling for a withdrawal, either immediate or gradual, of U.S. forces. President Bush, although he had abandoned his signature tune "Stay the Course" for p.r. reasons, responded to criticism by promising a troop "surge," a metaphor apparently drawn from the hurricanes his administration responded to as effectively as it has waged war in Iraq. Having committed an additional 21,500 troops to the effort, the President continues to insist that, while we are facing "difficult choices and additional sacrifices," victory is, nonetheless, "achievable." What a long way we have come from the bold statements that accompanied his administration's buildup, throughout 2002, to the invasion of Iraq. In those exuberant days, President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld sounded like Stuart Tarleton at the Wilkes' barbecue. The South could lick the Yankees in a month! "Gentlemen always fight better than rabble. A month—why, one battle—"

Throughout 2002, the President and his advisors insisted that they had not made up their minds to go to war, and some Republicans pretended to believe them. Most of us at *Chronicles* put as much stock in the denials as we put in the tales of Saddam's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. It seemed perfectly clear that, whatever Saddam did or did not do and no matter what Chirac or Putin said, the President of the United States was going to invade Iraq. We symbolized our conclusion with the cover of the March 2003 issue: an illustrated map of ancient Mesopotamia, with crosshairs lined up on Baghdad. The title was simply "Iraq."

The issue was published in mid-February and, within a month, the bombs were dropping on Baghdad. Although there had been much discussion (and even more duplicity) about the Bush administration's intentions, we had concluded, back in the autumn of 2002, that March was the likeliest time for the invasion George W. Bush's foreign-policy advisors had been planning since even before the election of November 2000. Some of our sources had suggested a much earlier date; others had revealed that Karl Rove was arguing for postponing the operation to avoid the mistake that cost George H.W. Bush his reelection: The victory had come too early, and, by Election Day, people were no longer dazzled by the news that the world's only superpower had defeated a Third World nation.

It was at a rare meeting of contributing editors that one of our colleagues made a convincing case for March. As it turned out, he not only thought the invasion was necessary but even resigned from the editorial board because of our foolish belief that Saddam did not have a vast arsenal of "weapons of mass destruction," that an invasion was as unwise as it was unjust, and that no crusade to build democracy in the Middle East could possibly succeed. He was very polite at the time and has continued to write for us, but I am still waiting for the letter saying: "I'm sorry, but you were right, and I was wrong."

In looking back at that March 2003 issue, I am struck by how "on target" we were. Thomas Ryba laid out the necessary conditions for a just war and concluded that even on the basis of the Bush administration's *propaganda*—in retrospect, the word is eminently fair—the war would not be just. Srdja Trifkovic made the case that the war had little to do with WMDs and a good deal to do with the oil industry and the Israel lobby. Right again. Wayne Allensworth, in an article too honest and too careful to make headway against invincible ignorance, laid bare Moscow's motives for abandoning Iraq.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect to our collective argument was the emphasis on the lessons of history. Several short pieces reminded our readers of such precedents as the Crusades and the War Between the States, and Michael Stenton provided a remarkably lucid account of the modern Iraqi state and the dangerous game played by Britain and soon to be imitated by the United States. His conclusion, on the prospects of imposing democratic capitalism on Iraq, is worth quoting:

> Iraqis are the best-educated people in the region: If any Arab economy can succeed, theirs can. Implicit in an American protectorate, however, would be a gamble on an economic transformation so steep and radical that it would remake society. Once in Baghdad, only excess can succeed.
>
> The chances of failure are more obvious than the prospect of success. The attempt, however, can run and run. As the British found, power in Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Cairo, and access to all of the oil, is a great lure. Since there is almost certainly no existing grand project, the empty minds will fill with something. At the heart of imperialism, new or old, is the dangerous partnership of cynicism and imagination.

Some readers and not a few colleagues were perplexed by my decision to draw some lessons from the history of ancient Mesopotamia. My decision was partly the not-entirely-accidental result of working on a similar article for our book on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but I was also immersed in revising a set of lectures on ancient history. In studying the "Fertile Crescent," I had come to two quite obvious conclusions about the region: first, that "Mesopotamia was the graveyard of empires," and that any great power foolish enough to involve itself had to be willing to shed more blood, American and Arab, than Americans could ever stomach; second, that "no one should have any il-

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lusions—after 5,000 years—about bringing peace and democracy to Babylonia and Assyria. Our grandchildren will not live to see that day . . ."

In reflecting on ancient history, I pointed out that some of the conflicts—for example, that between Iraq and Iran—go back thousands of years, while others originated in the Islamic subjugation of the Christian Middle East, and still others were engendered by Ottoman oppression and the intervention of Western powers. The basic point, expanded and adumbrated in the succeeding three years, was that historical antagonisms would rule out any purely military solution and make even a political-economic solution (massive aid, rebuilding of infrastructure, establishment of a stable puppet regime) a very difficult proposition.

Don Rumsfeld is anything but stupid, but I was never foolish enough to believe that we could have changed his mind if only he would listen to us for a day, a week, a month, a year. Like most Americans, he is ignorant of history and impatient with any evidence or argument that stands between him and the accomplishment of his goals. If he knows any ancient history, it would be the propaganda spooned out by Edith Hamilton and the Durants. Our leaders hate history, because it tells them that our empire, as much as any other, is bound by laws we refuse to recognize.

Three years ago, we were arguing that, right or wrong, the Bush administration did not have a ghost of a chance of ruling Iraq. When the invasion was finally launched according to schedule, I was frequently invited to appear on local television and radio shows. When asked what our next move should be, I always said the same thing, no matter what the event we were discussing: the fall of Baghdad, the capture of Saddam Hussein, the staged elections. Declare victory and get out. But what about achieving real victory? I could only answer with Pilate: "What is victory?" That is the question to ask President Bush today, when he is still claiming that victory is within our reach, but it was also the question that Congress should have been asking in early 2003.

Here at *Chronicles*, it was Michael Stenton, wised up by Britain's failures in the Middle East, who realized even before the invasion that we had no "existing grand project," only political nonsense concocted to fill the strategic void. First, we were told the fable of WMDs, which few of our editors believed for even a moment. When the propaganda moved away from Iraq as a threat to our (or, rather, Israel's) security to Iraq as an opportunity to build a democratic-capitalist showplace in the Islamic world, I was not alone in understanding what this meant. Our leaders and their advisors not only did not have a plan for victory, much less an exit strategy: They have never taken the trouble to define what victory might mean.

Victory over an enemy can take many forms. At the lowest level, the repulse of an invader—by force of arms or by bribes—is a victory. But, if the enemy is an enduring threat, something more than a mere defeat in the field might be required. Some enemies have to be thrashed so vigorously they will forego aggression for at least a generation. For tougher customers—or more attractive targets—nothing less than occupation and annexation will do. Taking a page or two out of Roman history, it is easy to see why the Romans decided to finish off Carthage and why they annexed the Macedonian kingdoms. Caesar's exploits in Gaul and Britain are harder to understand, except as means to making Caesar the dictator he became. Eventually, Gaul proved to be a valuable addition to the empire, but what was the point to the adventures of Varus, Drusus, and Germanicus across the Rhine? Not much, apparently, since Augustus and Tiberius squelched them.

In her wars, the United States has a mixed record. It is easy to justify our entrance into World War II as a necessity: No matter how culpable FDR might have been, we were, after all, attacked. In Korea, we were trying to contain the spread of an enemy ideology. The Mexican War is more complex: Both sides were provocative, and Mexico's corrupt political system made the American land grab almost inevitable. The acquisition of so much territory, whether as the fruits of victory or the big steal, was an unquestionable advantage to the American people.

The last time we had a president from Texas, he lost a war and spent the nation close to bankruptcy, but Lyndon Baines Johnson was a frugal pacifist compared with his spiritual descendant, Lyndon Baines Bush, thanks to whom Americans can look forward to another decade of national humiliation and diminishing economic expectations. Being Americans, we shall sulk and neglect our legitimate defense interests as we let the Muslims terrorize Christians around the globe.

Other wars are murkier. We had no business in the Philippines, where we slaughtered hundreds of thousands of civilians and gained little advantage. The Vietnam War, if we had fought to win, might have been a success, but we had not taken the trouble to define victory. Instead of defending our pro-Western Christian ally, President Diem, we backed the Buddhists, and, instead of taking the gloves off and pounding North Vietnam into submission, we allowed Robert McNamara to play war games that cost us the lives of more than 58,000 men and damaged our prestige for over a decade.

The only lesson Donald Rumsfeld learned from Vietnam was that McNamara had been insufficiently ruthless. As a technocrat, he could never understand that it is dangerous to entrust the management of a war to arrogant technocrats who have no combat experience. McNamara had been a whiz at analyzing U.S. bombing campaigns in World War II, and, when he applied his "science" in Vietnam, he ensured our defeat. Rumsfeld's obsession with military technology and his consequent neglect of the house-to-house reality of the fighting in Iraq doomed

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our campaign to failure.

Although quite different men in so many ways, McNamara and Rumsfeld share one great weakness: a contempt for the human factor. Their blindness is something more than mere weakness. The grand illusion of our time is that moral problems—drunkenness, lechery, gluttony, violence—can be solved by technical means. To cure a vice, all that is needed is a 12-step program, and, for more widespread problems such as poverty, famine, and war, we need scientifically designed campaigns. It is easy to forget, sitting in the office of the secretary of defense, Forrest's great dictum that "war means fighting, and fighting means killing." Short of wholesale extermination, there is no technical solution to suicide bombers in Baghdad.

The kindest judgment on the thinking that produced the debacle in Iraq is that it was Quixotic, that the President and his advisors shared the impossible dream of remaking the Arab world in the American image. They did not pause to ask themselves why, if the people of Iraq wanted democratic self-government, they had saddled themselves with tyranny for 5,000 years. It was, to put it in the suitable language of nursery rhymes, a policy of "*if*s and *an*s." If *if*s and *an*s were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers, and, if elections and constitutions produced peaceful democracies, there'd be no work for soldiers. But, to borrow another bit from Mother Goose, if Iraqi pigs could fly, they'd be dropping bombs on American soldiers. It is time for our foreign-policy planners to abandon the nursery and face the real world.

If we had given up the impossible dream of converting Iraq into an oil-rich Switzerland, what might victory have meant? George Bush Senior was content to humiliate Saddam's army and to keep his country weak and poor. Presumably, George Bush Junior's neoconservative advisors were hoping for a quasidemocratic Jordan or Turkey, states that find profit in their alliance with the United States and in their cooperative relations with Israel. Something like that might have been possible in the early days, when many Iraqis were grateful for the overthrow of Saddam's government. Now, they all hate our guts, including Iraqi politicians whose very survival depends on the U.S.-military presence. We have taught not just Muslims but the entire world that we are a dangerous and reckless country, and the evil presidents of Iran and North Korea are not the only leaders who have concluded that national survival lies in the development of a nuclear arsenal.

The last time we had a president from Texas, he lost a war and spent the nation close to bankruptcy, but Lyndon Baines Johnson was a frugal pacifist compared with his spiritual descendant, Lyndon Baines Bush, thanks to whom Americans can look forward to another decade of national humiliation and diminishing economic expectations. Being Americans, we shall sulk and neglect our legitimate defense interests as we let the Muslims terrorize Christians around the globe and the Chinese take over what is left of our manufacturing. As we sink, we shall devote more and more of our resources to socialized medicine and socialized schooling. Only the worst of our youth will join the Armed Forces, and most young men will only turn violent if someone buys the last PlayStation 7 from Wal-Mart.

Given the size of our consumer economy, we shall begin to recover sometime in the teens, though it will take roughly a generation—30 years—for us to forget how stupid we were at the start of the millennium. By 2030, we should be ready to go toe-to-toe with China or Russia or Europe—or perhaps all three. ©

Black Sea Sketches

BLACK SEA SKETCHES is a travel book written for serious travelers, including armchair travelers. Although the author may take an occasional swim or walk the beaches, the book is much more about the history and prehistory, the culture and the contemporary scene than about recreational opportunities. It is the kind of book you would want to read before or during your own travel in these fascinating countries.

The five countries—Ukraine, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia—often share military and economic history, but cultural contrasts abound: different alphabets and languages, different religions. While most of Ukraine, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Georgia embrace the Orthodox faith, Turkey is largely Muslim, as is part of the Crimean population. All five of the countries reflect, especially architecturally, the common past of ancient Greece and, most of them, of the later Genoan commercial empire.

Rising above the glittering monuments of the past, however, are the people Mills met and the stories of their lives, often of great courage under pressure and of generosity to a stranger and a traveler.

Comments about other works of William Mills

"William Mills' stories draw the reader deeply into the hearts and minds of men and women to reveal the essential nature of Man in a world governed by forces so primal there is no resisting their call, no mitigation of their judgment."

—Gordon Weaver

"Seldom have I found a contemporary poet so intensely and humanly convincing. Mills' voice is very near the fraternal and memorable sounds we all want to make, and say."

—James Dickey

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by Joseph Sobran

Hitchcock Without Stars

Alfred Hitchcock now enjoys a high and even, some would say, an exaggerated reputation among Hollywood film directors. Certainly, he is among the most influential, if only because with *Psycho* (1960) he created the mother, as it were, of all slasher movies. One reviewer, wishing to hint at the film's theme without revealing the ending, remarked: "Suffice it to say that mother love has received a blow from which that sentiment may not recover."

No other film in the genre is likely to match *Psycho*'s most shocking innovation: killing off the star early in the story. The gruesomeness of the famous shower scene was hardly more unsettling than this macabre trick on the audience's expectations, far beyond anything else Hitchcock ever did, before or after.

Hitchcock once remarked to an interviewer that, when you make a movie with a big star, the audience can count on one thing: That star's character is going to live to the end of the story. No matter how much danger he's in, Cary Grant or Jimmy Stewart can't die. The star system almost mandates happy endings.

Hitchcock's nature, especially his dark humor, chafed at this rule. He'd had to change the ending of *Suspicion* (1941), quite implausibly, because he had planned to have Grant murdering his wife, Joan Fontaine. Grant or the studio (accounts differ) refused to permit this. The director ventured one dark ending in *Vertigo* (1958), when Jimmy Stewart watched Kim Novak fall to her death. The movie flopped.

Hitchcock returned to form, or formula, in 1959 with Grant in *North by Northwest*, a frothy thriller and sensational hit—just what audiences (and studios) wanted. Now he was in a position to make the kind of film he really wanted to make, his revenge on the star system. It all but ended Janet Leigh's career.

Some of Hitchcock's most interesting films dispense with stardom and glamour. You sense that they are closer to his heart than most of the famous ones. In *I Confess* (1953), Montgomery Clift plays a priest who hears a murderer's confession and then is accused of the crime himself. Shot in black and white and set in Montreal, the story is more a study of the tormented priest than a suspense film. It belies Hitchcock's supposed contempt for actors: Clift is like a raw wound, and the director respects his talent so much that, for once, he seems to let the actor dominate the picture (though he later grumbled about Clift's "method" acting). Of all Hitchcock's mature films, *I Confess* may be the least obviously "Hitchcockian," even though its theme of a wrongly accused innocent man is very typical.

A 1956 film, *The Wrong Man*, is also, as its title makes clear enough, about the same problem, but again, it's far from formulaic. Based on a true story of false arrest for armed robbery, its style is almost documentary, and, once more, Hitchcock uses gritty black and white. The year before, he'd done another sumptuous thriller, *To Catch a Thief*, with Grant and Grace Kelly. This time, the stars, Henry Fonda and Vera Miles as his wife, play a couple of drab New York tenement dwellers, with Miles sinking into serious depression.

Hitchcock had high hopes for Miles, a beauty and a fine actress, and wanted her to star in *Vertigo*. But her pregnancy prevented this, though he used her again later as Janet Leigh's sister in *Psycho*. Like Clift, she should have had a brilliant career.

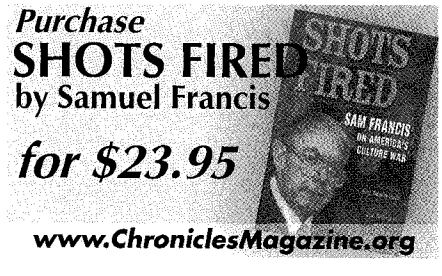
Topaz (1969), an almost epic story of espionage surrounding the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, is another anomaly, a movie with no single protagonist and no big names except the director's. The plot is complex, the characters many; but the large cast is excellent, and John Vernon is a memorable villain. The film was a popular and critical failure, but I have always enjoyed it for its spectacle, episodic suspense, and—an oddity in a Hitchcock picture—emotional warmth; one of its subplots is a moving love story that ends tragically. Hitchcock is usually apolitical; but the tone of *Topaz* is uncompromisingly anticommunist, a rather startling fact given that the film was made in the middle of the unpopular Vietnam War.

No doubt the appeal of *Topaz* was hurt by the absence of a star, but the richness of the other elements more than makes up for this. In fact, it shows what Hitchcock could do without the box-office allure of celebrity. In its own way, it adds luster to his achievement. Despite the huge bag of tricks available to the old master, near the end of his career, he was still attempting something new.

Hitchcock's last hit film was *Frenzy* (1972). The cast was mostly unknown; Jon Finch is suspected of the rape-murders of his ex-wife and several other women in London, and Hitchcock makes him so surly that he doesn't enjoy the automatic audience sympathy the Wrong Man usually receives. The real killer (Barry Foster) is the charmer here, while the film abounds in disagreeable minor characters. One of the victims is Finch's girlfriend (Anna Massey); Finch is convicted of the crime; and, in contrast to many of Hitchcock's thrillers, the audience has no assurance that justice will finally triumph.

Like *Topaz*, *Frenzy* is often gorgeous to behold. It's also full (as *Topaz* isn't) of Hitchcock's mordant humor.

Hitchcock's films often featured glamorous stars: Grant (four times), Stewart (four times), Kelly (thrice), Gregory Peck (twice), Ingrid Bergman (twice), Laurence Olivier, Sean Connery, Paul Newman, Julie Andrews. But he wasn't always happy with them; and he did some of his most interesting films without them, when he could be free of the necessities they imposed. Has any other director known so many different ways to make unforgettable movies? ©



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Iraq as "Intelligence Failure"

We Told You So

by Wayne Allensworth

"W," a.k.a. "our Commander in Chief," is apparently even more blindly stubborn and willfully ignorant than I had thought. As of this writing (December 2006), he is still distancing himself from the Iraq Study Group's efforts to provide him cover for a withdrawal from the Middle East morass he has drawn us into. Bush Senior, being a good father and perhaps a bit concerned for the country he once bravely served, had dispatched James Baker, Robert Gates, and others to save his offspring's hash and what Washington courtiers call (with a straight face) his "legacy." Part of that effort was the Iraq Study Group's report. What the report suggests seems quite simple: Withdraw U.S. combat troops by early 2008, while increasing the number of trainers for "Iraqi" units. (I did not realize that there was such a thing as a generic "Iraqi," but Americans are not strong on questions of identity these days.) Washington will turn over the "civil war," or "sectarian violence," or all-against-all chaos the country has descended into since the U.S. invasion to the "Iraqis" and be done with it.

The ISG has provided the President with the appropriate boilerplate to cover himself and get out. If he follows instructions, the withdrawal will have supposedly "dealt a blow" to "terrorism," while enhancing "stability"—and "America's credibility, interests, and values will be protected," or so we are told. The real story that unfolds in the initial report—the part our puerile chief executive does not like—is essentially what a lot of us already knew: The war is lost and probably could never have been won in the first place, at least in the utopian, democratist terms the Bush White House has employed throughout the shameful Iraq debacle. The report also tells us that "The situation in Baghdad and several provinces" is "dire" and that "violence is increasing in scope, complexity, and lethality." (Alas, the group has to employ such a term as *lethality* to soften the plain fact that lots of people are being killed and maimed.) In short, "there is no guarantee for success in Iraq." Overall, the situation is (not surprisingly) described as "grave and deteriorating."

As some of Bush's "sofa samurai" (Taki's memorable term for neoconservatives) are abandoning ship, pointing the finger at everybody but themselves, the President seems intent on dismissing many of the report's findings. And the *New York Times* tells us that a "huge struggle over Iraq policy" is only just beginning. That means that more people will be killed and maimed because of the President's hubris. The end will be the same, regardless. Americans have no taste for this war, and the United States will eventually withdraw.

Those of us who opposed this reckless adventure from the start should now say, "We told you so!" in no uncertain terms. We must do this for the historical record and to reemphasize the morality and rightness of a foreign policy that is based on American interests and a realistic understanding of human nature and the world we live in.

The Bush administration willfully and knowingly manipulated the intelligence record to get the war it wanted well before September 11, which was used as a pretext for invading Iraq. The manipulation of intelligence helped reveal the zealously pro-Israel (or, more properly, pro-Likud) bias of the coalition of interests beating the war drums in the Bush White House. As Allen Dennis wrote in these pages (*Cultural Revolutions*, September 2003):

> U.S. media have reported for months on the efforts of neoconservatives to push for war with Iraq before the September 11 terrorist attacks, as well as on their drive to make Iraq the primary target of U.S. military action after the attacks. Among the pro-war group's leading lights were Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, who reportedly pressured U.S. intelligence agencies to produce evidence linking Iraq to the Al Qaeda terrorist network. When nothing materialized, Rumsfeld and his neoconservative allies set up the Office of Special Plans (OSP) as the shadow intelligence arm of the White House, while Vice President Dick Cheney and newly minted Pentagon "consultant" Newt Gingrich made numerous—and unprecedented—trips to CIA headquarters, reportedly demanding that agency analysts take a more "forward-leaning" stance on Iraq threat assessments. . . .
>
> The war hawks' amateur intelligence operation also forged close ties to a similar unofficial group in Israel. The Israeli group was reportedly charged with providing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon with tougher and more alarming assessments of Iraq than official intelligence agencies were prepared to endorse. The Israel-OSP connection is not surprising: Both Rumsfeld's undersecretary Douglas Feith and neoconservative hawk Richard Perle once served as advisors to former Likud Party boss Benjamin Netanyahu. Israelis were reportedly able to visit the OSP without being cleared through normal Pentagon channels.
>
> . . . Ray McGovern, a former CIA officer, is one of several former agency analysts who have publicly attacked the Bush administration's use of intelligence and is a member of a group calling itself Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity. McGovern has claimed that the group is "hearing from dozens of [intelligence] people. A lot of them are very demoralized," as they have been under pressure to "cook" intelligence assessments.

Two of the claims made by the Bush White House were hotly disputed by intelligence professionals: that Iraq had weapons

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of mass destruction (WMD); and that Saddam Hussein had colluded with Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in planning and carrying out the September 11 attacks. No WMDs were found in Iraq, and no credible links between Iraq and September 11 have been uncovered. The Bush administration did not want to be encumbered by the reality-based community in its Tower of Babel blueprint for remaking the Middle East as a stronghold of democracy. To that end, as Mr. Dennis wrote in these pages (*Cultural Revolutions*, January 2005), the White House sent Porter Goss to the CIA to purge those deemed "disloyal":

> The purge began with the resignations of clandestine service chief Stephen Kappes and his deputy, Michael Sulick, followed by Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin. . . . *Newsday*'s source, identified as "a former senior CIA official who maintains close ties to both the agency and the White House," claimed that the purge would be a direct response by the Bush administration to perceived disloyalty: "Goss was given instructions . . . to get rid of those . . . [CIA] leakers and liberal Democrats." . . .
>
> One agency official subsequently said that "the word is out: The place is under lockdown."
>
> A Goss memo to agency employees seemed to make clear the aim of the lockdown: "We support the administration and its policies in our work," Goss wrote. "[W]e do not identify with, support, or champion opposition to the administration or its policies." Though the memo stated that intelligence officers should "let the facts" speak to policymakers, it seems clear that Goss intended to chill dissent.

One of those whom Goss (who has since been replaced by Air Force Gen. Michael Hayden) purged was Michael Scheuer, an intelligence veteran who had headed the CIA unit responsible for tracking Osama bin Laden. Scheuer was the anonymous author of *Imperial Hubris*, a devastating critique of the "War on Terror." What follows are excerpts from my review of that book ("A Rumor of War," *Reviews*, May 2005), which includes quotes from Scheuer:

> "I intend in this book," Scheuer writes, "to show that there is not now, and never has been, a shortage of knowledge about the nature and immediacy of the bin Laden threat, but only a lack of courage to tell the truth about it fully, openly and with disregard for the career-related consequences of truth-telling. Unfortunately, many in my generation of leaders find the task of doing their duty next to impossible. The failure of many to perform their duty lies at the heart of why three thousand Americans perished on 11 September 2001."
>
> Some, having tried to tell the truth, were punished by a system that claims it wants its bureaucracy to "think outside the box" but, in fact, hates and fears honesty, integrity, and expertise in all things apart from career advancement. In the end, "you can lead jackasses to water, but you cannot make them drink."
>
> Instead of doing their duty, which would entail "facing reality," our "hubris-soaked . . . leaders, elites, and media, locked behind an impenetrable wall of political correctness and moral cowardice, act as naïve and arrogant cheerleaders for the universal applicability of Western values and feckless military operations . . . while al Qaeda-led, anti-US hatred grows among Muslims, US leaders boast of being able to create democracy wherever they choose, ignoring history . . . " As a result, "it is fair to conclude that the United States of America remains bin Laden's only indispensable ally." Scheuer goes on to make a convincing case that the character of public "leadership" as described above not only helped make the September 11 attacks possible but is leading this country into quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq. . . .

Melanie Anderson

> "On Iraq, I must candidly say that I abhor aggressive wars like the one we waged there . . . [it was] an avaricious, premeditated, unprovoked war against a foe who posed no immediate threat," writes Scheuer. The U.S. invasion of Iraq was nothing less than "Osama bin Laden's gift from America, one he has long and ardently desired, but never realistically expected." An Iraq without Saddam would "obviously become what political scientists call a 'failed state' . . . a land where al Qaeda or al Qaeda-like organizations would thrive." Bin Laden could only dream of such a gift—until March 2003, when his dream came true. All he could have hoped for has come to pass. The United States, having already stayed too long, is insistent on a non-Islamic government that would subordinate the long-dominant Sunnis. Meanwhile, Arabs can see the destruction of the second holiest land in Islam, along with the prison torture scandal, on satellite TV and the internet. Young Islamic men are rushing to Iraq in the name of *jihad*, even as Washington is faced with the problem of dealing with a newly elected leadership weighted toward Shiites with historic ties to Iran. And all that is to say nothing of Kurdish aspirations in northern Iraq, where the establishment of a Kurdish state could provoke Turkish intervention. Does this look like a "mission accomplished" to anyone apart from the deluded inhabitants of the Bush White House?

As we predicted, the war in Iraq, a conflict cooked up by ill-formed ideologues intent on pursuing a Jacobin democracy-at-bayonet-point foreign policy backed by pro-Likud interests in the White House, has indeed been a disaster for the United States. It has unleashed chaos that will probably lead to the

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breakup of the country. And the chief beneficiary of the war has likely been Osama bin Laden.

I will mention one other prediction: that the toppling of Saddam and the subsequent chaos would be a disaster for the 2,000-year-old Christian community in Iraq. Before the war even started, I had written (*Cultural Revolutions*, March 2003) that "Iraqi Christians are paying the price of the Bush administration's desire to remove Saddam Hussein."

> Iraq's Christians fear that they will be the first victims of a war that might dismember the country, unleashing ethnic and religious conflicts that Baghdad had previously suppressed. Tariq, a Christian merchant in Baghdad, told the French weekly *Marianne* that "If the United States goes to war against our country . . . [t]he Wahhabis and other fundamentalists will take advantage of the confusion to throw us out of our homes, destroy us as a community, and declare Iraq an Islamic nation!" If recent history is any indication, Tariq has cause for concern: The Shiite uprising in southern Iraq during the Gulf War—encouraged and then abandoned by Washington—targeted Christians.

What followed the invasion were exactly the kind of attacks Iraqi Christians—who are leaving in large part for the relative safety of "Axis of Evil" member Syria—had feared. In a subsequent article (*Cultural Revolutions*, April 2006), I looked at what the invasion had wrought for the Christians of Iraq and what it might mean for Christianity in the Middle East:

> [T]he Bush administration, not bound by law or even common sense, has helped bring on, with its insistence on "regime change" in Iraq and democratist utopianism, what sensible Middle East analysts had predicted: Islamic militant groups are winning electoral victories across the region, setting the stage for a kind of "regime change" the White House may not have anticipated. Christianity in the Middle East could well be snuffed out once and for all.
>
> While Iraq's Christians are murdered, kidnapped, and forced to flee their homes and churches, the Praise Leader in Chief in the White House has ignored them, as have the Bush administration's ardent dispensationalist supporters, obsessed with their "end-times" theology and ignorant of the history of their own Faith. As the body count rises and the administration reloads for a new war, maybe these followers of the Prince of Peace should pause and ponder a timely question: *What would Jesus do?*

It has been suggested that, should the U.S. forces withdraw, Iraq will collapse and the United States will no longer be considered a "superpower." I doubt very seriously that the worsening of the situation in Iraq can be prevented by continuing to supply American targets for would-be jihadists. That is sad but true. It is partly out of sympathy for the sufferings of the people of Iraq that many of us have opposed this war. As for superpower status—*please*, take it, take it away from us, together with the blasphemous belligerence and fanaticism that accompanies it. I pray my children can live in an America that does not sacrifice her young people to maintain her status as a "superpower." ◁

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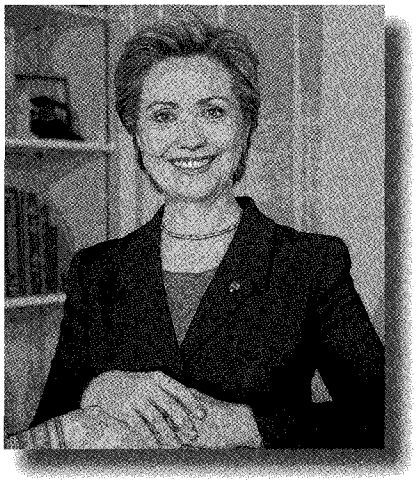

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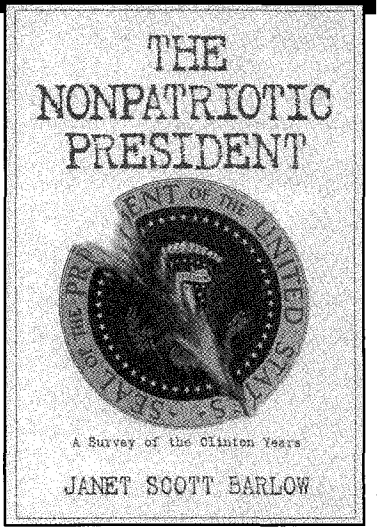

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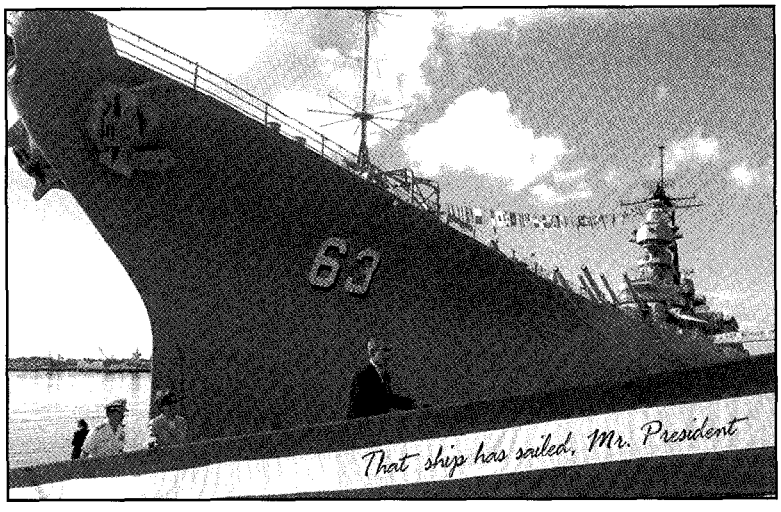
Exiting Iraq

The Least Undesirable End

by Srdja Trifkovic



Melanie Anderson

When a patient is diagnosed with lung cancer, it is tempting but not useful to harangue him on the evils of his three-pack-a-day habit. But when he refuses to kick that habit, or to accept its link with the disease, or even to acknowledge the seriousness of his condition, it is reasonable to assume that his hold on reality is tenuous, his moral fiber is weak, and his chances of recovery are slim.

President George W. Bush is guilty on all counts. Before we look for a solution to the nightmare in Iraq, it is therefore necessary to recapitulate three key facts.

As we had warned on the eve of the war, the invasion had been planned well before September 11, for reasons different from those proclaimed, and the "War on Terror" was mendaciously used as an expedient context for the premeditated war. Four years later, the exact intentions of different actors (Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Wolfowitz, Perle, Feith) may be in doubt, but the facts are not.

The improvised and ever-shifting political objective, stated in different ways at different times—to make Iraq democratic, friendly to the United States, staunch in the War on Terror, stable, independent, and unified—had been unattainable *ab initio* and remains so today.

In geopolitical terms, the main beneficiary of the war is Iran. The United States removed Iran's archenemy, Saddam Hussein, and replaced him with a Shiite-led government that seeks to remake the whole of Iraq in the image of the Islamic republic across the Shat-al-Arab. The war's secondary beneficiaries have been Sunni jihadists around the globe, for whom Iraq now provides a focal point, training ground, and mobilizing cause.

At this late stage in the crisis, Americans of various political persuasions should grasp that they share objective interests in Iraq that require nonideological policy responses. Those interests are threefold: to disengage without appearing utterly defeated, to leave behind the least undesirable *status quo*, and to counter as much as possible the advantage gained by America's rivals and enemies.

Over the past three months, it has become evident that Mr. Bush is unwilling to accept this reality, let alone to act on it. Analyzed dispassionately and without prejudice derived from the falsehoods and errors of the previous four years, his latest gambit—increasing troop levels by over 20,000 men (forget the "women") and exerting pressure on the government of prime minister Nuri al-Maliki to get its act together—suffers from two fatal weaknesses.

In military terms, Mr. Bush's approach confuses tactics and strategy. The tactical novelty of his approach is relatively minor. Instead of going into militia-infested areas of Baghdad, cleaning them up, and leaving—which enables the insurgents to reclaim them within days—increased numbers are supposed to make it possible for U.S. troops to retain a presence in the newly secured neighborhoods. The problem is that those areas would then have to be transferred to Iraqi control, and there is no reliable "Iraqi" force that is a neutral provider of security to all citizens.

The focus on accelerated training of the Iraqis nevertheless remains a regular feature of Mr. Bush's speeches. A year and a half ago, he declared that "we're working to build capable and effective Iraqi security forces, so they can take the lead in the fight—and eventually take responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens without major foreign assistance." He continues to neglect the issue of those security forces' motivation and loyalty. A Sunni or a Shiite who joins the Iraqi army or police force remains primarily loyal to his sect and to his clan. This fact is confirmed by countless incidents in which armed men in Iraqi police or army uniforms

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were involved in killing unarmed civilians from the other side of the sectarian divide. The culprits are not guerrillas masquerading as members of the security forces; they *are* the security forces. The fact that such men are given arms and solid military and police training by top-notch American instructors is counterproductive as long as the use of their skills and their weapons remains unrelated to Mr. Bush's stated policy objectives.

The depth of the schism between the motivation of Iraqis in uniform and the White House's goals was embarrassingly visible in the reaction of Kurdish soldiers last January to the order to go to Baghdad and help maintain order. Some deserted their units outright, while others reported sick or went AWOL. All of them complained that the Sunni-Shiite bloodbath in the capital was not their fight, and that they should not be asked to serve outside the confines of their *de facto* self-governing Kurdistan. Their American instructors warned that the loyalty of the Kurds is to their homeland and its *peshmerga* militia, not to Iraq, and that mutiny was in the air. If the Kurds, supposedly the most trustworthy allies America has in Iraq, cannot be trusted to conduct operations that transcend the interests of their own group, it is preposterous to expect a "pan-Iraqi" attitude from the protagonists in the ongoing sectarian war, the Shiites and Sunnis, whose mutual disdain claims some 3,000 civilian lives each month.

In political terms, the Shiite tail is already wagging the White House dog. Mr. Bush's warning that, if the Iraqi government fails to control sectarianism, "it will lose the support of the American people and it will lose the support of the Iraqi people" is hollow. First of all, there is no "Iraqi people" as a coherent polity that shares the sense of common destiny and common aspirations. As for prime minister al-Maliki and his fellow Shiites, their "pledges" are worthless. They do not give a hoot for the "Iraqi people" outside the confines of their own community. They are not concerned about the support of the "American people," either. If that support (or lack thereof) had been capable of shaping actions and policies on the ground, American forces would be withdrawing from Iraq rather than increasing their numbers. The Shiite leadership, penetrated by Iranian agents and Muqtada al-Sadr's radicals, will not be intimidated by Mr. Bush's threat of disengagement, because they do not need him any longer: He has finished the toughest part of the job for them.

As long as we do not have a truly "new" strategy—*i.e.*, one that would be detrimental to the Shiites' interests—and as long as the ongoing "surge" remains focused on the Sunni insurgency in Baghdad itself and in the Anbar Province, American GIs will continue to pull the Shiites' chestnuts out of the fire. The Iranians do not mind: They are in the Iraq game for the long term, and they know that, if they play their hand right, they may shoot the moon. As long as an Operation Iranian Freedom is not in the cards (no matter what Neocon Central may wish or hope for), the Americans may remain in Iraq on the Shiites' sufferance. Of course, there will be no sustained attempt by U.S. forces to go after Muqtada al-Sadr and his militia, because the Shiites in the Iraqi security forces—particularly those in the Ministry of the Interior—would turn against the Americans. Those institutions are thoroughly penetrated either by the Badr Brigades, commanded from Tehran, or by the Mahdi Army, controlled by al-Sadr himself. Had Mr. Bush exerted his pressure on al-Maliki's predecessors when those Shiite warriors were first detected inside Iraq's new security services, a purge could have worked.

By now, however, Iraq is in the grip of a vicious civil war, whether Mr. Bush accepts that term or not. By effectively condoning the quasilegal lynching of Saddam Hussein, the administration has taken sides in that war. It may be too late now to follow my recommendation, made shortly before Saddam's execution, that the United States should try to create a split within the ranks of Iraqi insurgents between the ideologues of *jihad*, who care little for Iraq as such but simply want to use her as a chapter and a focal point in their global struggle, and those who are driven primarily by nationalist and tribal motives. "This would require overcoming distaste for a dialogue with former Ba'athists and Saddam loyalists, but no such dialogue will be possible if Saddam is hanged under the noses of American soldiers," I warned last December.

The only way dialogue could begin, at this late stage, would be if the Bush administration grasps that it needs to level the playing field, strengthen the weaker party in the civil war—the Sunni Arabs—and let the Kurds proclaim full independence as a precondition for eventual withdrawal. The least undesirable situation we can leave in Iraq is the one that Tehran and its Shiite clients in Baghdad find least palatable. An anti-Shiite, anti-Iranian, nationalist Sunni-Arab state in central and western Iraq is the best possible bulwark against Ahmadinejad's intention to create a Tehran-dominated belt that would extend over Iraq and Syria to the Hezbollah-controlled redoubt in southern Lebanon. Furthermore, an independent Kurdistan would inevitably create instability in northwestern Iran, which is the home to between seven and ten million Kurds. (The Turks will scream bloody murder, but their "post-fundamentalist" government also needs to be kept in check, and its regional ambitions in Central Asia and in the Aegean, curtailed.)

Mr. Bush's failure to offer a coherent, let alone creative, response to the ongoing disaster in Iraq has no precedent in this country's history, Vietnam included. Even his rhetoric is devoid of political imagination. Addressing the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis in November 2005, when he unveiled his "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," the President declared that we are battling an "enemy without conscience" and that "there will not be a signing ceremony on the deck of a battleship." Over one year and 1,000 American lives later, on January 11, 2006, he said that we are battling enemies who are "without conscience" and that "there will be no surrender ceremony on the deck of a battleship."

If Mr. Bush lacks the good sense to find speechwriters capable of coming up with new clichés for such important occasions, it is hardly surprising that his new plans, strategies, or blueprints for Iraq look barely distinguishable from those preceding them. The "deck of the battleship" metaphor displays a doubly patronizing attitude: It assumes that the public will not notice, or mind, that it is being fed recycled platitudes; and—worse still—it imagines that the public needs such metaphors because it does not grasp the intricacies of a challenge as complex as that which he faces.

The challenge is admittedly formidable, but Mr. Bush and his team are the ones who have made it so. It is by now evident that they are unable or unwilling to resolve it. That it will eventually be "resolved" by the likes of Hillary Rodham Clinton or Barack Hussein Obama is neither comforting nor, I fear, avoidable.

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A Collation of Birds

by Peter Hunt

Water Birds

Cold, rippled water tinged with red
In early afternoon; water hens
And grebes with bugled cries swim fast
Across the dam, silver-circled
Wavelets fanning out to shore;
When all at once, birds in joy
Go fluttering across the brim
Splashing crystal sprays into
The lucent spell of wintry sun.

Mid-Winter Scene

Grevillea and wattle,
red and yellow side by side,
wildly royal, glowing in
half-misty rain, half-sunlight.
On them an Eastern spinebill,
Itself a hovering, dipping
Black-beaked creature of a range
Of colours, light-dark brown,
White throat and breast of gold,
Its eyes circlets of fiery red
Around a star embedded in the dark.

The Wild Crested-Pigeon

So delicate amidst the greedy noise of drab
Brown mynas hungry after rain, it pecked
For seeds across the grass, with pointed crown
And smooth round breast in shades of lavender
And pink, all flecked with gold. Rare visitor,
It ventured close to me as if it felt
Lean years of some Egyptian famine made
It trust my morning hand; demure and mild
It seemed. Was that its voice I heard last night
Cooing in the safety of its nest,
Murmuring into dreams and waking thoughts
Like one I've heard before in other realms?
And what magic made the whirring music of
Its wings remind me of a fiddle played
In ancient sea-gulled streets of Donegal?

Yarramundi Evening

The car glides down the mountainside
Through forest briefly lit by shafts
Of light, and rain-cooled air that's stung
With wood-smoke scent and bell-bird notes;
A glimpse of shadowed water-birds
And poplars dark against the sky,
As elegiac evening settles in.

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The War on Terror Ended

And the Winner Was Not the United States

by Leon Hadar

Baghdad, 2027 (Year of the Goat). Special for the Shanghai Post *(proud member of the Global Murdoch Group).*

Unlike some of my readers, I'm old enough to remember the time, during the American occupation of Baghdad, when this part of the city was known as the Green Zone. It was renamed the Yellow Peace Zone ten years ago, after Iraq joined the China-led Association of South-West Asian Nations (ASWAN). In fact, I'm digital-delivering this report on my Chinese-made RedPeony from Ali Baba's Pagoda Hotel, which is located near the embassy of Greater China and which was built in 2015 in exactly the same location where, two years earlier, a devastating explosion triggered by fighters allied with the al-Sadr brigades destroyed the gigantic U.S. embassy, forcing thousands of American citizens to flee Baghdad and make their way to the Turkish-controlled northern part of Iraq.

Indeed, I was there in Baghdad on that historic day, October 12, 2013, and I watched as Lauren Bush, the last U.S. ambassador to Baghdad (and daughter of Neil Bush, a brother of former President George W. Bush), as well as other U.S. officials and Iraqi public figures, including Ahmed Chalabi, were evacuated. That last U.S. helicopter left the city on its way to the aircraft carrier USS *Richard Cheney*, which was positioned somewhere in the Persian Gulf. It was a sad and traumatic moment for many older Americans, recalling memories of another humiliating evacuation of U.S. diplomats and citizens from Ho Chi Minh City, following its liberation by the People's Army of Vietnam on April 30, 1975 (an event the Americans refer to as the "Fall of Saigon").

Long before the Americans decided to end their diplomatic presence in Baghdad in May 2013 (Mexico, a member of the North American Union, represents U.S. diplomatic interests in Iraq now), American pundits had already started debating the question of "Who lost Iraq?" After the Americans decided to close their last naval base near Haifa in Israel-Palestine, on September 17, 2016, the most popular topic at major conferences in think tanks in Washington, D.C., became "Who lost the Middle East?"

As an old Middle East hand, I was invited to address one such conference, at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C., on June 11, 2017. The event, held in the Richard Perle Auditorium at the Leo Strauss Building and sponsored by the *Weekly Standard*, was bursting with symbolism. After all, it was in the offices of this think tank that the so-called neoconservatives, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington of September 11, 2001, had drawn up the plans for the ousting of Iraq's Saddam Hussein and for "remaking" the Middle East under U.S. leadership. The neoconservative agenda of trying to establish U.S. hegemony in the Middle East—or an American Empire, as some had referred to it—as a way of advancing American interests and values was embraced by the administration of President George W. Bush. That, in turn, created the conditions for the collapse of U.S. power in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Five-Year War (2008-13) between Iran and the Arab-Sunni Coalition headed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria, the Quartet (China, India, Russia, and the European Union) helped bring some stability to the region, with Turkey playing a leading role in ending the civil wars in Iraq and Lebanon.

The conference at AEI brought together some of the surviving neocons, including former *Weekly Standard* editor (and advisor to failed Republican presidential candidate John McCain) Bill Kristol; Michael Ledeen, who, with aging Italian politician Alessandra Mussolini, is now running the Gabriele D'Annunzio Institute in Rome; and Paul Wolfowitz, the president of AEI, then writing *The First Neocon*, his biography of Leon Trotsky. Unfortunately, Perle, after whom the auditorium was named, passed away three years ago after choking on a bone in a fish restaurant in Paris—although some conspiracy theorists allege that he was poisoned by an agent of a "foreign power" who was worried that Perle was planning to reveal in his memoirs new details about the events that led to the U.S. decision to oust Saddam.

The title of my address was "The Gulf Wars: Was U.S. Strategic Loss Inevitable?" Discussing the dramatic events that unfolded in the first decade of the 21st century, starting with the September 11 terrorist attacks, I tried to draw the outlines of the counterfactual "what if" scenario and contrast it with what really happened. I started by suggesting that September 11 had highlighted the costs of the strategy of maintaining U.S. hegemony in the Middle East after the end of the Cold War and, particularly, in the aftermath of the Gulf War of 1991. That strategy had been embraced by both Republican President George H.W. Bush and the Democratic administration of President Bill Clinton, and it was based on the notion that an "over the horizon" presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states would be sufficient to contain the anti-*status-quo* powers of Iraq and Iran (a policy known as "offshore balancing") and that continuing American diplomacy aimed at fostering peace between Israel and the Palestinians would help win the support of the moderate Arab regimes in the region. In short, it was a low-cost strategy aimed at deterring potential challenges from regional players, such as Baghdad and Tehran, as well as global powers such as the European Union.

But the collapse of the Camp David talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians in 2000 and the start of the Second

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Intifada, followed by September 11, illustrated the need for replacing the Pax Americana approach in the Middle East and also provided Americans with a glimpse of Hell-on-Earth, of what could happen if the tensions between the West and the Islamic world degenerated into a bloody global confrontation. "In retrospect, it seems to me that a mix of the right policies, including effective security measures and creative diplomatic efforts following September 11, could have ensured that the primary goal of Osama bin Laden—forcing the United States and the West out of the Middle East and creating the conditions for a War of Civilizations—would not have been achieved," I argued in my address.

"But as we know now, after September 11, U.S. foreign policy was hijacked by a bunch of American ideologues who exploited the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in order to advance a U.S.-led messianic crusade to remake the Middle East—in the most devastating way, as far as U.S. national interests and the Western presence in the Middle East was concerned," I continued. And I speculated that, "in retrospect, the United States and the European Union, backed by Russia, China, and the rest of the international community as an effective Concert of Great Powers—a U.S.-led global oligopoly as opposed to the model American monopoly envisioned by the neocons—could have attempted to ensure that the goals of the invasion of Afghanistan were accomplished through the capture of Osama and the rest of the Al Qaeda leadership. That could have been followed by pursuing a common strategy aimed at the radical Muslim terrorist networks in Europe, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, while working together with the pro-Western governments in the Middle East, including Hussein's in Iraq." The United States and her allies, in a 21st-century version of the Congress of Vienna, could also, with a little political imagination, have tried to manage some of the explosive policy issues that helped to ignite anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world, including the tensions with Iraq and Iran, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the rise of political Islamic movements.

In raising this "what if" scenario, I stressed that I was not arguing that there would have been easy and quick solutions to these issues. When you are trying to treat a headache, however, there is a difference between banging your head against the wall and taking a rest and an aspirin. The Bush administration, led by a powerful group of neoconservative policymakers and their allies in the think tanks, media, and even the blogosphere, ended up placing the hunt for Osama on Washington's back burner and, instead, launching a unilateral invasion of Iraq. The stated aims became "liberating" Iraq from the rule of Saddam Hussein and his secular regime and turning it into a shining model of freedom and democracy for the greater Middle East. The decision produced a fissure in the transatlantic relationship, ignited anti-American hostility in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and weakened the antiterrorism alliance. The Bush administration exacerbated the situation by giving a green light to Israel to destroy the infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority and refusing to move toward some form of rapprochement with Iran, with which Washington shared common interests in post-Taliban Afghanistan and in post-Saddam Iraq. At the same time, the neocon Democracy Project helped bring to power in Baghdad a coalition of Shiite clerics with ties to Iran, led to the election of the radical Islamic group Hamas in Palestine, and strengthened the power of the Shiite radical Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Putting all of these historic developments into context, I told the audience at AEI, one could have concluded that the post-September 11 U.S. policies were nothing short of a revolutionary attempt to weaken the very fragile foundations of the political *status quo* in the Middle East—without coming up with a viable and sustainable strategy aimed at replacing them in a way that would help protect long-term American and Western interests. The United States destroyed Iraq's military power, the only counterbalance to Iran, without making an effort to co-opt Iran into the system. She got rid of an Arab-Sunni dictator who had kept the lid on the ethnic and religious powder keg of Iraq, and she helped create the conditions for a bloody civil war there without deploying the necessary military troops to deal with such an outcome. In the process, the United States strengthened the power of the Shiites in the Middle East who threatened the Arab-Sunni regimes, while empowering Kurdish nationalism, which alarmed Turkey and Iran. At the same time, U.S. policies that helped radicalize the Palestinians also enabled the election of the Palestinian offshoot of the radical Muslim Brotherhood, ensuring that the Palestinian-Israeli peace process would not be revived and providing a sense of political momentum to Muslim Brotherhood groups in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East.

The United States got rid of an Arab-Sunni dictator who had kept the lid on the ethnic and religious powder keg of Iraq, and she helped create the conditions for a bloody civil war there without deploying the necessary military troops to deal with such an outcome.

Add to all of that the growing anti-Western emotions among Muslims worldwide, as demonstrated in the "cartoons war"; Iran's drive to achieve nuclear-weapons capability; and the continuing domestic challenges faced by the pro-American regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, and it became quite obvious that no one, not even the group of Wise Men (and one Wise Woman) who constituted the Iraq Study Group, could have pushed the rewind button, restored the *status quo ante*, and saved President Bush and the U.S. foreign-policy establishment. The powerful forces unleashed by the United States could not be stopped and ended up intertwining with other global developments, including Sino-American competition over energy and rising economic nationalism in the West, not to mention the expanding U.S. budget and trade deficits and the domestic political discontent that led to the election of an anti-Bush Democratic Congress in 2006. Not unlike the aftermath of World War I, which brought about the collapse of great empires (including that of the Ottomans in

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the Middle East), the dramatic changes that had taken place in the Middle East helped produce much instability in the coming years and ignited forces that challenged U.S. supremacy in the region and around the world.

What happened in the Middle East could be described as dialectical thinking run amok. President Bush and his neoconservative advisors had pledged that, after ousting Saddam Hussein, they would succeed in transforming "liberated" Iraq into a prosperous democracy that would serve as a model of political and economic freedom for the Middle East. Westernized and secular Mesopotamia was supposed to have a "domino effect" on the rest of the authoritarian governments in the region. Hence, the withdrawal of Syria's troops from Lebanon in the aftermath of the so-called Cedar Revolution, which was celebrated as an important chapter of the U.S.-led "democratization" of the Middle East, was supposed to help eradicate the sectarian splits in that country and make it possible to disarm and co-opt the Shiite-led Hezbollah into the political system. The expectation in Washington was that this would be followed by the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in Damascus, leading even to the downfall of the ayatollahs in Tehran. And finally, as the Bushies envisioned it, "the road from Baghdad would lead to Jerusalem." That is, the dramatic explosion of freedom in the Arab world would make it more likely that the Palestinians would move to establish their own independent state and conclude a peace accord with Israel. In the first stage of that process, the Palestinians would hold a free election that would bring to power a moderate and peace-oriented leadership.

President Bush's project to remake the Middle East collapsed within a year of its launch in 2003. Iraq did indeed become a model for the entire Middle East—a model of sectarian violence, religious extremism, and growing anti-American and anti-Western sentiments. If anything, Bush's policies had made the Middle East safer for ethnic and religious strife, not for democracy. His policies helped to shift the balance of power in the region in the direction of Iran and Shiite and Sunni radicals. Iraq started exporting war and instability to the rest of the Middle East. Arab-Shiites and Arab-Sunnis were massacring each other throughout the country; the fighting gradually degenerated into a civil war and the splitting of Iraq into Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish ministates. In Baghdad, Saddam's secular regime was replaced through an open election by a coalition of Shiite religious parties with links to the ruling Shiite clerics in Iran.

The main beneficiaries of these developments were Iran's religious Shiite rulers, who strengthened their influence in Iraq and encouraged radical Shiite groups—including Hezbollah in Lebanon—in the so-called Shiite Triangle stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Levant to reassert their power and challenge the ruling (pro-American) Arab-Sunni governments there. In Iran herself, instead of the Democratic Spring that the neocons had predicted, the ayatollahs actually strengthened their hold on power, and a virulent anti-American (and anti-Israeli) figure was elected president through a mostly democratic process. In Lebanon, U.S. pressure forced the withdrawal of Syrian troops that had been invited by the Arab League to bring stability into that country in the aftermath of the civil war and the Israeli occupation in early 1982 (which had also helped give birth to Hezbollah). Then, the Americans celebrated the sectarian parliamentary election that helped increase the political power of Hezbollah and brought it into the government. Hence, Hezbollah gained more power and representation, while a weak central government lacked the power to disarm its militias, which continued to dominate southern Lebanon and the border with Israel. And the road from Baghdad did not lead to Jerusalem. The Bush administration failed to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and increased U.S. backing for Israel. At the same time, the Americans, resisting advice from Israelis and moderate Palestinians, insisted on holding free elections in the West Bank, which led to the victory of Hamas, an anti-Israeli, anti-American, radical Sunni group that is opposed to holding peace negotiations with Israel.

On one level, on the "democratic" side of the democratic empire in the Middle East, the Bush administration launched a revolutionary process that brought to power, and played into the hands of, the more radical, anti-American players in the region: Iran and her alliance of Shiite groups in Iraq and Lebanon, as well as Hamas in Palestine and, by extension, the Muslim Brotherhood in the rest of the Arab-Sunni world. On another level, on the "imperial" side of the democratic empire in the Middle East, the Americans moved aggressively to strengthen their hegemony in the region directly (Iraq), indirectly (Lebanon), and through proxies (Israel). They attempted to build up an international coalition to contain and isolate Iran and force her to give up her ambition to develop nuclear-weapons capability, and adopted a similarly punitive approach to Damascus while trying to oust Hamas from power.

"Was it surprising," I asked, "that this mishmash of idealistic democracy-promotion crusades and a unipolar approach aimed at establishing U.S. hegemony in the Middle East ended up producing an *ad hoc*, informal coalition of anti-American players, who were emboldened thanks to Washington's policies and who are now trying to challenge U.S. power?" Iran, whose leaders sensed that she was gradually becoming a regional power, and an isolated and angry Syrian regime decided in 2006 to utilize their proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas, to deliver an indirect blow to American power by making aggressive moves against an American proxy, Israel. Indeed, it was in that geopolitical and regional context that one must place the killing and kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers on Israel's borders with Gaza and Lebanon that led to the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. The goal of this action was to demonstrate that, against the backdrop of the U.S. quagmire in Iraq and the increasing influence of Iran, Washington would find it difficult to maintain the *status quo* in the region. And that is exactly what happened. The Bush administration had given Israel a green light to attack Hezbollah, hoping that Israeli military power would succeed in defeating Hezbollah and Hamas and leave the Americans in a position to counterbalance Iran's growing power. Instead, by launching missile attacks against targets in Israel, including Haifa, and resisting an Israeli ground invasion of southern Lebanon, Hezbollah demonstrated its growing military and political power, while the Israeli air bombardment of Lebanon only produced more anti-American sentiments in the Middle East. "Ironically, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice explained to me and other reporters, who had traveled with her to Lebanon as she was trying to defuse the crisis, that the scenes of death, destruction, and human misery from Beirut, Haifa, and Gaza are—get this!—'birth pangs of a new Middle East,'" I recalled.

If anything, the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war was probably the

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turning point in the American imperial project in the Middle East. The war exposed the weakness of Israel and her American patron while shifting the balance of power in the direction of Iran and Syria. Demonstrating the rising U.S. problems in the region, Washington, with its military overstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan, had to plead with the French and the Germans (and the Chinese) to deploy peacekeeping troops to Lebanon. And, in another attempt to counterbalance the Iranians, the Americans, with the support of the Saudis, gave a green light to the Israelis at the end of 2007 to strike alleged nuclear military sites in Iran. As in Lebanon, the Israeli aerial bombardment resulted in thousands of civilian casualties while failing to destroy the main and secret nuclear military site. Iran retaliated by attacking oil platforms and tankers, closing the Strait of Hormuz, and hitting oil infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates. Iraq's Shiite government announced its support for Tehran and called on the United States to withdraw her troops from Iraq. And Hezbollah's forces in Lebanon launched another set of devastating missile attacks on Israel, hitting Tel Aviv and oil refineries in Haifa, while its militias succeeded in overrunning the forces that backed the pro-Western government in Beirut. Israel reacted by invading southern Lebanon and taking control of the roads leading to Damascus, while U.S. Marines and French forces landed in Beirut. At the same time, American air and missile attacks destroyed Iran's oil installations and crippled her economy.

While the United States and Israel emerged as victorious from the military campaign, not unlike the British, French, and Israelis after the 1956 Suez Campaign against Egypt, they found themselves totally isolated in the international community and facing enormous diplomatic and economic pressure to reverse their policies. As oil prices soared to more than $125 per barrel, Venezuela imposed an oil embargo on the United States, and China threatened to create the conditions for the collapse of the dollar by selling her U.S. Treasury bonds if Washington did not agree to convene an international conference on the Middle East that would determine the political future of Iraq and Lebanon, as well as take steps toward imposing a peace accord on Israel and Palestine. This international pressure, combined with a deteriorating economy at home and growing political opposition, including threats by Congress to impeach Bush, forced the White House to agree to take part in such a conference, which produced an interim and loose confederal arrangement backed by fragile cease-fires in Iraq, Lebanon, and Israel-Palestine in June 2008. Unfortunately, growing tensions between Damascus and Baghdad along the border, following the deployment of Syrian troops into the Arab-Sunni enclave of Iraq, resulted in the collapse of the cease-fire agreements in the region and marked the start of the bloody Five-Year War. The only good news for Washington was the decision by the government of the Israel-Palestine Federation to refrain from taking sides in the Sunni-Shiite conflict and to ask the Americans and the Europeans to provide it with security guarantees. However, after President George P. Bush (the nephew of George W.), a.k.a the First Hispanic-American President, announced his decision to close down the U.S. naval base in Israel-Palestine, the government in Jerusalem decided to follow in the footsteps of most of its neighbors and join the China-led ASWAN. In fact, Beijing announced that the headquarters of its alliance in Western Asia—Americans still refer to the region as the "Middle East"—would be located in Tel Aviv. ©

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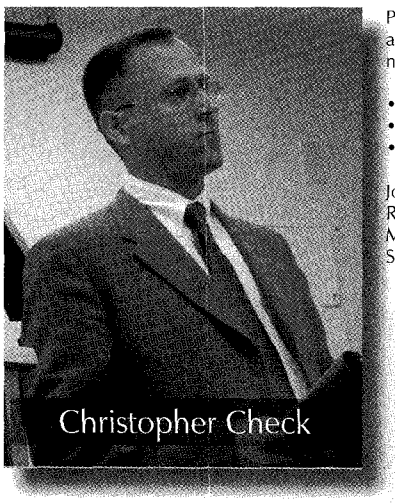

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Reject False Prophets

The First Step in Mitigating the Iraq Debacle

by Ted Galen Carpenter

In marked contrast to the optimism that the Bush administration and its supporters expressed about developments in Iraq as late as the spring of 2006, only a few diehards now deny that the security environment there is dire. When Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) asked secretary of defense nominee Robert Gates whether the United States was winning in Iraq, Gates replied bluntly: "No, sir." The Bush-appointed bipartisan Iraq Study Group epitomized the new pessimism, noting in its December 2006 report that the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating."

There is no shortage of suggestions about what the United States should do going forward. Unfortunately, many of the loudest voices belong to the same people who prodded the Bush administration into invading and occupying Iraq in the first place. If we are to extricate the United States from the Iraqi quagmire, the first step must be to ignore the "experts" who led us into that morass and begin to listen to real experts who correctly warned about that debacle.

It is clear in retrospect that the administration and its supporters miscalculated badly. President Bush's May 1, 2003, speech aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Lincoln* beneath a large "Mission Accomplished" banner was the perfect symbol for the misplaced optimism that pervaded the administration and its hawkish political allies.

Kenneth Adelman, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the Reagan years, famously predicted that the mission would be "a cakewalk." Other advocates of the war were equally ebullient. It would be like Paris in 1944, with the Iraqis greeting American troops as liberators, not occupiers. In April 2003, pro-war syndicated columnist Mark Steyn predicted that "in a year's time Baghdad and Basra will have a lower crime rate than most British cities." Furthermore, there would be "no widespread resentment at or resistance of the Western military presence."

Warnings about the deep ethno-religious divisions in Iraq were summarily dismissed. On April 1, 2003, *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol opined that "there's been a certain amount of pop sociology in America . . . that the Shi'a can't get along with the Sunni, and the Shi'a in Iraq just want to establish some kind of Islamic fundamentalist regime. There's almost no evidence of that at all." A month later, *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer stated confidently that "the United States is in a position to bring about a unique and potentially revolutionary development in the Arab world: a genuinely pluralistic, open and free society." Other proponents of the war assumed that Iraq not only would be a collegial democracy at home but would have an extremely friendly policy toward both the United States and Israel. Some even predicted that the new Iraqi government would construct an oil pipeline with a terminus in Israel.

According to that rosy scenario, the transition to a democratic Iraqi government would be swift and easy. Department of Defense planners assumed that U.S. troop levels would be down to 50,000, or even lower, by the end of 2003. Some military experts, though, warned that such optimism was unwarranted. Gen. Eric Shinseki, the Army chief of staff, predicted that the occupation would require "several hundred thousand troops" for a period of "many years." Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz flatly rejected Shinseki's assessment in congressional testimony. For his candor, Shinseki was pressured into an early retirement.

Wolfowitz also scoffed at notions that the occupation would be a financial drain. He predicted that Iraq's oil revenues would pay for the entire costs of reconstruction. Again, those officials who dared sound discordant notes were shown the door. Larry Lindsey, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, warned that the cost of the Iraq occupation could exceed $200 billion. He was pressured out of his post soon thereafter.

Of course, in one sense, Lindsey was wrong. The Iraq war did not cost $200 billion; it has cost $350 billion and counting. And that figure does not include long-term, indirect costs—for example, the continuing medical care and rehabilitation expenses for the more than 22,000 service personnel who have been wounded (many severely). Former Rep. Lee Hamilton, cochairman of the Iraq Study Group, has stated that the costs could exceed one trillion dollars in the near term. Another estimate by Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard University economist Linda Bilmes in January 2006 concluded the direct and indirect costs of the Iraq war would be some $1.2 trillion, assuming that the United States began to withdraw her troops in 2006 (which, of course, Washington did not do); otherwise, they could reach $2 trillion.

Uneasy officials were not the only ones to warn that the Bush administration's optimistic scenario was unwarranted. In January 2002, more than a year before U.S. troops entered Iraq, I cautioned that

> no matter how emotionally satisfying removing a thug like Saddam may seem, Americans would be wise to consider whether that step is worth the price. The inevitable U.S. military victory would not be the end of America's troubles in Iraq. Indeed, it would mark the start of a new round of headaches. Ousting Saddam

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Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign-policy studies at the Cato Institute, is the author of seven books on international affairs. He is also the coauthor of Exiting Iraq: Why the U.S. Must End the Military Occupation and Renew the War Against Al Qaeda *(2004).*

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would make Washington responsible for Iraq's political future and entangle the United States in an endless nation-building mission beset by intractable problems.

As war grew nearer, other experts echoed such warnings. On September 26, 2002, 33 prominent foreign-affairs scholars published an advertisement in the *New York Times* under the headline "War In Iraq Is Not in America's National Interest." Among the points they made was that the administration of George H.W. Bush "did not try to conquer Iraq in 1991 because it was understood that doing so could spread instability in the Middle East. . . . This remains a valid concern today." They added: "Even if we win easily, we have no plausible exit strategy. Iraq is a deeply divided society that the United States would have to occupy and police for many years to create a viable state." Experts who signed that ad included University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer, MIT professor Barry Posen, Columbia University professor Richard K. Betts, and the dean of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Stephen M. Walt. In February and March 2003, Boston University's Andrew Bacevich and Texas A&M University's Christopher Layne added their voices to the chorus warning of disaster, with Layne correctly foreseeing a "post-Saddam quagmire."

Not only did the administration and other proponents of war ignore such warnings, they refused later on to recognize growing evidence that the mission was going badly. Even as the security environment deteriorated, the chorus of optimism scarcely diminished. In early 2005, Vice President Dick Cheney confidently asserted that the insurgency was "in its last throes." When the Iraqi parliament approved the Islamist-leaning government of Nouri al-Maliki in April 2006, the editors of *National Review* stated that it symbolized the triumph of democracy and that the "purveyors of doom now have some explaining to do."

By late 2006, though, the evidence of massive disorder in Iraq was irrefutable. Instead of admitting error, most of the hawks have redoubled their efforts to give advice about proper future strategy. Arguing that it would be disastrous for the United States to acknowledge defeat, they offer a variety of schemes to salvage victory for the ill-starred intervention. The most prominent proposal by far is to increase U.S. troop levels in Iraq. The increasingly shrill neoconservatives argue that the Bush administration had launched the mission with too few troops—even though most of the lobbyists for war had argued exactly the opposite at the time. (Indeed, some of them, including Wolfowitz, had proposed going in with an even lighter force—no more than 40,000 or 50,000 troops.) Now, they insist that even the existing force of 145,000 is insufficient.

However, the hawks cannot agree on how many additional troops would be enough. Some propose only another 20,000 or so. Still others contend that at least 50,000 will be needed, and American Enterprise Institute scholar Frederick Kagan makes the case for sending 50,000 to 80,000 troops—a position endorsed by the editors of the hawkish *Washington Times*. Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) talks openly about dispatching another 100,000. The hawks also have a range of views about how long the buildup would be needed. Some argue that it would be only a short-term mission (a few months) to stabilize the security environment in Baghdad, where the disorder is most severe. Others hint that the buildup might have to last several years. At any rate, President Bush indicated, in a speech to the nation delivered on January 10, that he is still listening to the hawks by announcing that he plans to send 21,500 additional troops to Iraq.

Given their track record, the arm-chair generals are the last people on the planet the President should turn to for advice on future policy regarding Iraq. Instead, advice should be sought from the experts who correctly predicted disaster if the United States invaded that country. Not surprisingly, most of those experts now advocate a prompt withdrawal from Iraq, despite the inevitable blow to America's pride and credibility. Layne, Bacevich, Mearsheimer, and Walt have been especially outspoken about the folly of "staying the course."

Except when the survival of the nation is at stake, all military missions must be judged according to a rigorous cost-benefit calculation. Iraq has never come close to being a war for America's survival. Even the connection of the Iraq mission to the larger war against Islamic terrorism was always tenuous, at best. For all of his odious qualities, Saddam Hussein was a secular tyrant, not an Islamic radical. Indeed, radical Muslims expressed nearly as much hatred for Saddam as they did for the United States. Iraq was an elective war—a war of choice, and a bad choice at that.

Those who pushed America into the Iraq quagmire denounce any proposal for withdrawal as "cut and run." It is well past time to counterattack and demand that the hawks be specific about their strategy. Vacuous statements such as "we will stand down when the Iraqis can stand up" or "we must stay until the job is done" are simply unacceptable.

It is especially pertinent to ask the Bush administration and its hawkish backers at what point they will admit that the costs of this venture have become unbearable. How much longer are they willing to have our troops stay in Iraq? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? How many more tax dollars are they willing to pour into Iraq? Another $500 billion? One trillion? Three trillion? And most crucial of all, how many more American lives are they willing to sacrifice? Two thousand? Five thousand? Ten thousand?

Proponents of the mission studiously avoid addressing such unpleasant questions. Instead, they act as though victory in Iraq can be achieved merely through the exercise of willpower. President Bush epitomized that attitude during his November 2006 trip to East Asia, when he asserted that the United States would definitely win in Iraq—unless we decided to quit before the job was done. A worrisome indicator of Bush's thinking is that he did not regard America's long and bloody war in Vietnam as a mistake. The mistake, in his view, was that the United States did not stay the course until victory was attained. If that is the governing attitude regarding the Iraq conflict, we are in for a prolonged and horrifically costly mission.

We need an exit strategy measured in months, not years. Alarm bells should be ringing when the people who pushed America into the folly of a nation-building mission in Iraq are now advocating a redoubled effort. Given their dismal track record, we ought to understand that such a strategy is the one thing we must not do under any circumstances. They are false prophets who have led the republic into disaster. We must spurn them regarding Iraq and every other foreign-policy issue. ◁

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The U.N. Reform on Human Rights

An Interview With Jan Eliasson

by Alberto Carosa

Mr. Jan Eliasson, former Swedish minister of foreign affairs, is a good representative of the tradition of chivalry that Saint Bridget attributed to the Swedish people in the 14th century. From 1994 to 2000, Eliasson served as Sweden's secretary for foreign affairs, a key position in formulating and implementing foreign policy. Earlier, he was Sweden's ambassador to the United Nations. During this period (1988-92), he also served as the U.N. secretary general's personal representative on Iran/Iraq and was chairman of the U.N. General Assembly's working group on emergency relief (1991), vice president of the Economic and Social Council (1991-92), and chairman of the U.N. Trust Fund for South Africa (1988-92). In 1992, Eliasson was appointed as the first U.N. undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs. During his tenure, he was involved in operations in Somalia, the Sudan, Mozambique, and the Balkans and also undertook initiatives concerning land mines, conflict prevention, and humanitarian action. From 1980 to 1986, Mr. Eliasson took part in the U.N. mediation missions in the war between Iran and Iraq, headed by former Prime Minister Olof Palme. More recently, Eliasson served as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and was a visiting professor at Uppsala University in Sweden, lecturing on mediation, conflict resolution, and U.N. reform.

Eliasson was also Sweden's ambassador to the United States from September 2000 to July 2005. On March 27, 2006, he was appointed foreign minister of Sweden. He stepped down with the change of government in late 2006, following the general elections.

He was unanimously elected president of the 60th session of the U.N. General Assembly on June 13, 2005, a position he held until September 11, 2006. In this capacity, he was the behind-the-scenes protagonist of the reform of the U.N. Human Rights Council.

In his acceptance speech, Eliasson said that this appointment bore "a special significance for my country, since the legendary Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was born in Jönköping, Sweden, this year one hundred years ago." Dag Hammarskjöld's independence, moral integrity, and unwavering dedication inspired little love from the major powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union.

Eliasson has authored and coauthored numerous books and articles and is a frequent lecturer on foreign policy and diplomacy. For his efforts, he has received numerous awards, including honorary doctorates from American University in Washington, D.C.; Uppsala University and Göteborg University, Sweden; and Bethany College, Kansas.

Alberto Carosa, an independent journalist, writes from Rome.

Mr. Eliasson was kind enough to grant us the following interview, which took place in the historic Casa di Santa Brigida in Rome, a national shrine for Swedes and all Nordic people.

What are the main features of the new U.N. Human Rights Council?

It has been streamlined. It's smaller than its controversial predecessor (the Commission for Human Rights), and it should hopefully be more effective. It will be convened several times per year, not just for six weeks in Geneva in the spring. But the most important thing is that the member countries should themselves be subject to control in their human-rights policy as long as they serve in the council. If a country is found guilty of serious infringements of human rights, she may be suspended and lose her membership. Member countries should also make commitments regarding their respect of human rights, and they will be monitored to ensure that they are living up to those commitments. This new council has built-in features that the old one did not have. And it is usually of paramount importance—in politics as well as in ordinary life—for the rules to be abided by.

How do you respond to those who have doubts because of the presence of such members as China, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia on the Council?

One could also list a number of countries that did not present their candidacies or whose candidacies were not accepted. There can be no doubt, however, that several countries have felt that this is a kind of an "eye of a needle" that they have to go through. And, above all, when you are on the Council, you know that you are to be reviewed carefully. Therefore, all countries are aware that, if they want to participate in this kind of work, their own activities will be under scrutiny. I am a practical person, and, at the same time, I also hope I have a vision. So I find it of utmost importance that the United Nations really provides something that is of real use to the individual person. My hope is that this new council will be able to play a part in that. There are so many things to look after: the situation facing children and women; the use of torture in so many places; trafficking in human beings; that slavery still exists in today's world. There are so many things to be worked on in a practical way. I hope that this council will be a sharper instrument than the old one.

Is this just the most-talked-about part of the general U.N. overhaul? What else is happening?

Yes, it is one of the two large institutional reforms that we

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have carried through. There is also the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission, which has been established to ensure that we do not abandon countries that have endured crises and conflicts. Look at Afghanistan: What happens when you abandon a country as soon as the CNN cameras disappear? In such instances, we may easily end up entangled in a new conflict, which is exactly the situation in which we now find ourselves. We have to help reconstruct the country and institutions, and we must carry out the work of reconciliation. And that is where the Catholic Church, for example, can come in. I believe that, in this regard, the Catholic Church has a great role to play both in preventing conflict as well as in promoting reconciliation.

The new Human Rights Council is, to some extent, your creation. Do you have any special recipe, or secret, to make diplomatic efforts successful?

There were some tough negotiations, and I was entrusted with leading them. When the decision to establish the Council was finally made in March 2006, I was very relieved. When it comes to diplomacy, I look to the role model of Swedish diplomacy, Dag Hammarskjöld. If you try to analyze what made him a great U.N. secretary general, you find that he was a very practical man, but he was also a very spiritual man. You have to have a spiritual element in order to achieve the results that you need to have in today's world. There has to be an element of passion and an element of compassion. Without passion, nothing happens in life; without compassion, the wrong things happen. It was the spiritual dimension that gave him strength. He was the father of peacekeeping operations and was one of the fathers of preventive diplomacy. He was a master of languages—fluent in English, Swedish, German, French. But he was also a literary figure, a member of the Swedish Academy. He served as secretary general of the United Nations from 1953 until his death. He died on a mission for peace in the Congo. In his briefcase, which was found near his body after his plane crashed near Ndola (in what was then North Rhodesia) on September 17, 1961, was a small copy of the U.N. Charter and an English edition of the New Testament and Psalms, which were always with him when he traveled.

The man you describe is a very interesting figure, one who could not be more relevant to today's world. Would you elaborate on Dag Hammarskjöld?

Dag Hammarskjöld was an independent man who refused to bend to the major powers. Instead, he tried to build a strong United Nations. His guiding principle was a sense of duty and self-sacrifice combined with what he often referred to as "integrity." In the Prologue to a collection of selections from his speeches and statements, edited by diplomat and writer Kai Falkman, we read that Dag Hammarskjöld inherited from several generations of soldiers and government officials on his father's side "the belief that no existence is more satisfying than the unselfish service of one's country—or of humanity," while, from scientists and clergymen on his mother's side, he inherited "the belief that in the true, radical meaning of the gospels, all people are equally God's children, to be met and treated by us as teachers of God." It's not surprising that these visions led him to ponder eternal issues.

After his death, a book came out, *Markings*, in which he describes, in brief sentences and paragraphs, his spiritual life.

Alberto Carosa

When I read them at the age of 26, I found them very lofty and somewhat difficult to comprehend; now, at a much later age, I think I know what he meant. They are really striking, and I reread them in view of the fact that Sweden launched my candidacy to be president of the U.N. General Assembly on the 100th anniversary of his birth. They remind me of the importance of an element of spirituality, but, at the same time, that you have to be very concrete.

Can you tell us something about your meeting with the Pope?

I was very honored to meet with His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, last summer. I felt that the Vatican and the Catholic Church were helping me achieve the results that we ultimately reached and supporting the objective of finalizing negotiations for the establishment of the new council. The discussions I had with the Pope and the members of his staff responsible for the foreign policy of the Holy See were most rewarding and interesting. We discussed the need for global solutions to global problems as well as the problems of mistrust and the tendencies in many parts of the world to use religion and culture for political purposes, thereby increasing the gap between different cultures and religions. We also talked about our roles in facilitating reconciliation in conflicts. We spoke of the need for working practically to help people who are under repression and who do not enjoy freedom. To sum it up, we talked about the challenging tasks of the United Nations concerning security, development, and human rights. This gave me new energy in fulfilling my national and international responsibilities.

Did you also address the challenges posed by Islam?

Yes, we talked in general terms about the need for ecumenical work and the danger of religion being used for political purposes by groups who do not want reconciliation, and about how enormously important it is to strengthen dialogue and to strengthen the elements in the world that work in the direction of reconciliation and dialogue, rather than confrontation.

A recent issue of La Civiltà Cattolica *speaks of a renewed interest in religion in Sweden—Catholicism, in particular. Is this what you are seeing?*

I cannot be sure about that, but there certainly is a growing interest in spiritual matters. I can't give statistics, but, of course, the fact that Sweden is becoming a multicultural country and that other cultures and religions have a presence in our society has brought about some changes and new tendencies. ◁©▷

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Imagining the Permanent Things

by Scott P. Richert

"I see the imminent death of 20,000 men, / That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, / Go to their graves like beds . . . "

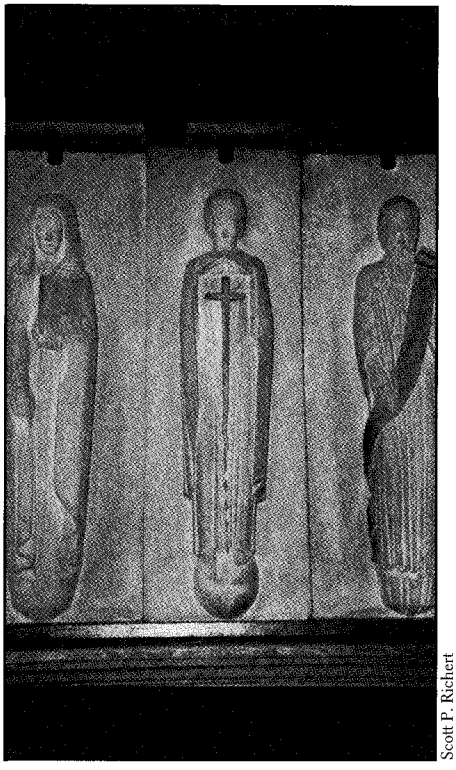
—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The Essential Russell Kirk: Selected Essays
George A. Panichas, ed.
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books; 525 pp., $30.00

◆

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of *Modern Age*, the flagship journal of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, edited now for almost half of that time by George A. Panichas. Russell Kirk (1918-1994), the founder and first editor of *Modern Age*, always took great delight in even the smallest coincidences in life, and so he is no doubt pleased to see *The Essential Russell Kirk*, edited by Panichas, appear in 2007.

Kirk should be pleased, too, with the result of his editor's efforts. Panichas has made a near-perfect selection of 42 essays, arranging them in nine sections that touch on every major theme of Kirk's more than 40 years of intellectual endeavor. Moreover, he has gone beyond the call of duty as editor, carefully trimming sentences and passages for the sake of concision while leaving Kirk's arguments unaltered. He introduces each essay with a short paragraph or two placing it in historical context and tying its theme to the overarching subject of the section in which it appears. Each of those sections receives a slightly longer introduction, and Panichas has written a Preface to the entire volume that is far more illuminating than much longer, even book-length, treatments of Kirk's thought. The first-time reader of Kirk, or those who have read him before through the lens of other authors, will benefit greatly from this Preface. Panichas can offer insights that others have missed simply because he does not impose an external structure on Kirk's thought but takes him on his own terms.



Scott P. Richert

Since Kirk was the first to admit that he was not himself a systematic philosopher, imposing another thinker's philosophical structure on his writing is not likely to help us understand Kirk, or to gain insight from him. (Combining Kirk's insights with those of other, more systematic thinkers to produce a synthesis is another matter altogether.) As Panichas explains,

> The fact is that there is no single terminal point, no fixture, in Kirk's expository concerns and aspirations; there is only the constant and living necessity to press and press the essences of an idea or a thought, to wrestle ceaselessly with words and meaning, and to proceed towards a deeper recognition of the nexus of the old and the new, of cause and effect, of human and divine truth.

This "deeper recognition" was as much imaginative and historical as philosophical and rational, and so it is appropriate that one of the longest sections of the book concerns "The Moral Imagination," a term that Kirk borrowed from Edmund Burke but ultimately made his own. The moral imagination, Kirk writes, "signifies that power of ethical perception which strides beyond the barriers of private experience and momentary events" and "aspires to the apprehending of right order in the soul and right order in the commonwealth." While Kirk was not received into the Catholic Church until 1964, his understanding of the moral imagination was, from the beginning, an intellectual Incarnationalism. (The same is true of his understanding of natural law, which, as W. Wesley McDonald shows in *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology*, Kirk identified with the moral imagination.)

Those who dismiss Kirk as "simply an essayist" or who complain that his most famous work, *The Conservative Mind*, is not a philosophical exposition of conservatism but a series of biographical and historical sketches fundamentally misunderstand Kirk's own philosophical presuppositions. When Kirk wrote of "The Idea of Conservatism" or "Our Sacred Patri-

Scott P. Richert is the executive editor of Chronicles.

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mony" or "Principles of Order" (the titles of the first three sections of this volume), he had to do so through a discussion of a particular person or historical event, because he did not believe that principles could ever be wholly separated from the people and the culture which embodied them. Goodness and truth and beauty may be transcendent (as Kirk did indeed believe), but we know the good, we experience order and justice, by interacting (personally or imaginatively) with good and just men, which enables us (should we so desire) to become good and just ourselves. The loss of such men entails the destruction of order and justice in society at large—the destruction, finally, of civilization. Even natural law cannot be known in some pure form outside of the incarnate world or, indeed, outside man himself. Philosophical abstraction from the people and places and historic institutions of human life is the beginning of ideological thinking; taken too far, it becomes the death of the moral imagination.

This is illustrated nicely by the essays Panichas has chosen for "Principles of Order." In each one, Kirk examines one thinker—Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, and his friends T.S. Eliot and Eric Voegelin—to help us understand better the life that we, personally and in society, should desire to lead. His description of Tocqueville's method in *Democracy in America* could be applied equally to Kirk's own work:

> By his extensive acquaintance with England, by his political career, by his investigations into American life, and by his unassuming erudition, Tocqueville was prepared to pronounce with authority concerning human and social nature. He wrote with extreme care, anxious to be moderate, zealous to be just.

That care to be moderate and just by no means implies an uncritical acceptance of the ideas of those whose imagination is perverse or diabolical—or, perhaps worse yet, nonexistent. Panichas's sixth section, "The Drug of Ideology," presents Kirk the critic at his best. From his earliest writings, Kirk insisted that "The conservative mind and the ideological mind stand at opposite poles." This claim has occasionally caused confusion even among Kirk's friends and admirers, some of whom think that it shows that Kirk was actually hostile to systematic thought. Kirk's disdain for ideology, however, is not an attack on systematic philosophy but on the very modern tendency to reduce all of human life to a system in order to manipulate it. In his essay "The Drug of Ideology," Kirk makes this plain:

> "Ideology" does not mean political theory or principle, even though many journalists and some professors commonly employ the term in that sense. Ideology really means political fanaticism—and, more precisely, the belief that this world of ours may be converted into the Terrestrial Paradise through the operation of positive law and positive planning.

Kirk's attack on ideology, far from being a disparagement of reason, was made in the defense of older political, philosophical, and theological traditions—the Permanent Things.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote that "The madness of tomorrow is not in Moscow, much more in Manhattan"; and, like the Polish pope he so greatly admired, Kirk attacked all ideologues, whether of the left or (putatively) of the right. *Capitalism*, he never failed to remind us, is a Marxist word; to call oneself a "capitalist," therefore, implies something very different from supporting economic freedom. The truth is that the economic order is made for, and by, man; it is not akin to physics, nor must man serve it.

That is one of the many reasons that Kirk was unyielding in his criticism of libertarians, to whom, in an essay reprinted here, he famously applied T.S. Eliot's label of "chirping sectaries." Like all ideologues, the libertarians (Kirk believed) have a deformed vision of reality not simply because of intellectual misunderstanding but because of hubris.

> The first Whig was the devil, Samuel Johnson informs us; it might be truer to say that the devil was the original libertarian. "Lo, I am proud!" The perennial libertarian, like Satan, can bear no authority temporal or spiritual.

While Kirk genuinely admired some of the work of Ludwig von Mises, he correctly pegged Mises as "the disciple of Jeremy Bentham" and pointed out that Mises had referred to himself at the tenth-anniversary meeting of the Mont Pélerin Society, "though with a degree of irony," as an "entrepreneurial Marxist." The appellation "libertarian conservatives," Kirk argued, was an oxymoron, akin to "Muslim Christians." (He did concede that there are some who call themselves libertarians as a shorthand way of expressing their belief in "an enduring moral order, the Constitution of the United States, free enterprise, and old American ways of life," but he argued that they were mistaken: They were actually conservatives.)

Kirk believed a similar hubris characterized another group of putative conservatives, and one of the great surprises of this volume is that Kirk's October 1988 Heritage Foundation lecture "The Neoconservatives: An Endangered Species" is not included. While the speech has become (in)famous for the partial line "And not seldom it has seemed as if some eminent Neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States," Kirk was as much concerned with the distortions introduced into American foreign policy by ideological preoccupations as he was with the particular ideologues themselves. He accused leading neoconservatives, including Irving Kristol and Michael Novak, of a "lack of wisdom" that manifested itself in their "puerile infatuation . . . with 'a new ideology' or 'an American ideology.'"

> To expect that all the world should, and must, adopt the peculiar political institutions of the United States—which often do not work very well even at home—is to indulge the most unrealistic of visions; yet just that seems to be the hope and expectation of many Neoconservatives. . . . Such foreign policies are such stuff as dreams are made of; yet they lead to the heaps of corpses of men who died in vain. We need to ask ourselves whether the Neoconservative architects of international policy are very different from the foreign policy advisors who surrounded Lyndon Johnson.

Not only would this speech fit this section of *The Essential Russell Kirk* perfectly, it also shows the Sage of Mecosta at his prophetic best, in both the strict and popular senses of the word. In the intervening years, that "most unrealistic of visions" of the neoconservatives has seemingly eclipsed their very ability to perceive reality. Even now, as their vision has destroyed all social and political order in Iraq, they lay the blame at the feet of the

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Iraqi people for failing to embrace their vision and the American people for failing to support it.

I mentioned above that the Tel Aviv quotation is partial; those who quote it always leave off the rest of the sentence: "And not seldom it has seemed as if some eminent Neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States—a position they will have difficulty in maintaining, as matters drift in the Levant." Kirk was offering a warning to wayward neoconservatives to rein in their imperialist ambitions, and, with great sadness, he saw that statement vindicated as early as 1991, in the Gulf War. Horrified by the death and destruction rained upon the Cradle of Civilization, he subsequently abandoned his support of President George H.W. Bush, becoming the Michigan state chairman of Patrick J. Buchanan's 1992 campaign for the Republican nomination for president. Anyone who knew him, or has even a passing familiarity with his writings, knows how much more he would have abhorred the current war, with its "heaps of corpses of men who died in vain"—much less the horrific attack last year on the civilian population in Lebanon, which may have been conducted by the Israeli Defense Force but was urged and defended by the neoconservative ideologues.

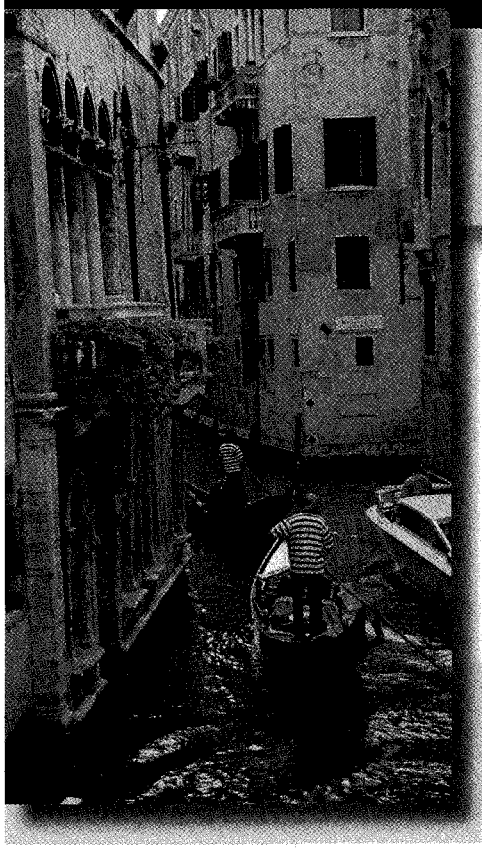
Those who say that no one could have known how the current war in Iraq would turn out are put to shame by Kirk, who, having no way of foreseeing a war that would occur almost a decade after his death, essentially predicted the outcome over 14 years before the war commenced. But then, he had an advantage that the ideological supporters of this war sorely lack: political imagination.

For Kirk, the most dangerous effect of "ideological sloganizing" is that it kills political imagination. Like his friend John Lukacs (a letter from whom Kirk quoted in "The Neoconservatives"), Kirk understood that historical consciousness depends as much upon imagination as it does upon reason—perhaps more so, since reason can only work upon the material presented to it by the imagination. It matters little whether George W. Bush is an intellectual moron; that he lacks even the limited political imagination that his father possessed was enough to ensure that his presidency would be disastrous.

Still, Kirk, in "T.S. Eliot's Permanent Things," offers us some hope for redeeming even this worst of times. While it may be hard for us to glimpse an end to the havoc being wrought by our current ideologues, "In the long run, it is the man of vision who prevails, not the eager little knot of intellectuals hot after novelties." As Eliot himself wrote of the destruction of Christian civilization, "The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse," so that one day we may "renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide."

Panichas ends this collection, appropriately, with Kirk's Epilogue to his posthumously published memoirs, *The Sword of Imagination*. Kirk's last piece of writing, completed only after he learned that he was dying, "Is Life Worth Living?" is both Kirk's "valedictory statement" (as Panichas puts it) and a profound meditation on the continuity of life and the afterlife, comparable to his perfect gem of a ghost story, "An Encounter by Mortstone Pond." While Kirk had described his conversion as an intellectual one in "Belief Will Follow Action," a chapter of *The Sword of Imagination*, the Epilogue makes it clear that, in the end, "the evidence of things not seen" was truly his reward. He expresses no doubt, no hesitance, as, brandishing "his Mogul sword," he prepares to pierce the veil; indeed, Russell Kirk's last word to us is "Forward!"

"What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants are the kings, Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?



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The Sage of Covington

by Jack Trotter

Walker Percy Remembered: A Portrait in the Words of Those Who Knew Him
by David Horace Harwell
Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press; 200 pp., $24.95

◆

In the Introduction to *Walker Percy Remembered,* David Horace Harwell explains that he began his project with the idea of writing a conventional biography of Percy, one that would explore some fresh aspect of the novelist's life. Then, as the research unfolded, he "found the form that best suits Percy." The result is what Harwell calls a "community biography," a collection of interviews with Percy's friends, acquaintances, and family members. A "community biography" strikes me as a suspect notion. If one assumes that a biography is an attempt, however inevitably flawed, to write a coherent account of a person's life, then it is difficult to see how a miscellany of interviews, even when conducted by the same interviewer, can amount to a biography, communal or otherwise. Moreover, Harwell's approach works at cross purposes. On the one hand, he attempts to bring some thematic coherence to most of these 13 interviews by focusing his questions especially on Percy's involvement in the community of Covington, the Louisiana town on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain where he lived for the final decades of his life. On the other, Harwell gives his interviewees free rein to ramble on at length about anything they please—which, more often than not, turns out to be themselves. Thus, Harwell's attempts to maintain thematic continuity are frequently thwarted by the garrulousness of some of his subjects. That said, I hasten to add that, however misleading the concept, Harwell's "community biography" is not without interest and would no doubt have amused Dr. Percy himself, who was, as Harwell notes, "a man who lived for just such conversations."

Percy lived in Covington with his family for over 30 years and died there in 1990. In his 1980 *Esquire* essay "Why I Live Where I Live," Percy claimed to have moved his family to Covington because it was the perfect "nonplace" for him—just far enough from his Greenville, Mississippi, upbringing to keep the ancestral ghosts at bay, yet within shouting distance of the Big Easy, a city oozing with a sense of place. Of Covington, Percy wrote,

> It had no country clubs, no subdivisions, no Chamber of Commerce, no hospitals, no psychiatrists . . . I didn't know anybody, had no kin [there]. A stranger in my own country. A perfect place for a writer!

Indeed, Percy wrote five of his six novels in Covington, not to mention a number of first-rate philosophical essays and the whimsical *Lost in the Cosmos.* Yet Percy did not remain a stranger there. As Jay Tolson's 1992 biography of Percy, *Pilgrim in the Ruins,* reveals, and as Harwell's collection of interviews amply confirms, Percy was—contrary to expectation, perhaps—very much a part of his community. He was an active member of the Community Relations Council of Greater Covington, a biracial group of citizens who worked to improve employment and housing conditions for blacks; he was enthusiastic about the local Head Start program, even volunteering to drive a Head Start bus; he was a key figure in organizing a credit union for poor blacks; he was involved in his local parish and served on the school board at St. Scholastica's, a Catholic girls' high school; and he was active in a number of reading groups, both in Covington and in New Orleans.

In these interviews, Harwell is particularly intent on highlighting Percy's involvement in civil-rights issues during the turbulent 1960's, but very little is revealed that has not already been covered in the standard biographies. Certainly, it is well known that, on racial matters at least, Percy was a JFK liberal in those years and worked hard to oppose the influence of the Ku Klux Klan in the Covington area. When Harwell asks Nikki Barringer, a Covington attorney and a good friend of Percy's, about the novelist's civil-rights work, Barringer notes, among other things, that Percy became involved in a Confederate-flag dispute after some black students in the local high school became "incensed" that the flag was being displayed in the office of the school's principal, Louis Wagner. After the students filed suit to have the flag removed, Percy was called to testify. According to Barringer, Percy testified "that he was a person knowledgeable in the business of icons . . . and that, yes, indeed, this sort of thing would incite children in the school to aggressive behavior." In fact, the Tolson biography covers this incident in more detail; there, we learn that, after the U.S. district court in New Orleans ruled that the flag was a provocation and would have to be removed, the Percy family received bomb threats from the local Klan and spent two weeks sleeping in the attic of their house. Since Tolson says nothing about how Percy came to be called as a witness in the first place, one would have thought that Harwell might attempt to probe attorney Barringer's memory for some illuminating background detail, but he fails to do so. I was left wondering whether the protest and subsequent legal action had been organized by the students themselves, or whether the NAACP (or some other group of activists) had been involved. Harwell also passes up a wonderful opportunity to ask how Percy's ideas about the Confederate flag might have changed over the years. For example, did he, in the 1980's, years after the Klan's power had been successfully crushed, still believe the flag's symbolism to be hopelessly tainted by racist associations? And how did Percy view the rise of the affirmative-action culture of the 1970's and 80's? Did he feel that the work of the civil-rights movement was genuinely furthered by racial quotas? Harwell never asks such questions, though a number of the interviewees in this book would no doubt have been able to provide some insight.

Another line of inquiry that Harwell pursues involves Percy's commitment to the Catholic Church. James Boulware, described by Harwell as "a former priest at [Covington's] St. Joseph Abbey," makes the somewhat controversial claim in the book's opening interview that Percy "was never comfortable as a Catholic," that he was "still Protestant, but he saw through the kind of thin veil that you find in Protestantism, and he saw the richness of the Catholic church." Percy attended Mass at St. Joseph's for many years as one of Boulware's parishioners; we might assume, then, that Boulware had some pastoral reason for questioning the depth of Percy's commitment to Catholicism. However, he offers nothing substantial in evidence. In Boulware's opinion, Percy the philosopher always had the upper hand over Percy the man of faith:

> I don't think he ever found something that was completely convinc-

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ing for him. He just kept peeling the onion, trying to move further and further to the core of something, and I don't think he ever found it.

Whatever truth there may be in such claims, it is curious that Harwell never asks Boulware why he left the priesthood (in 1979), thus depriving the reader of the kind of perspective that would allow him to make a more informed judgment about the validity of this renegade priest's claims. It is undoubtedly the case that Percy, according to Tolson and others, suffered a crisis of faith in the 1970's, but he reaffirmed that faith in subsequent years and, by most accounts, remained a staunchly traditional Catholic to the end.

While *Walker Percy Remembered* adds little of substance to our biographical knowledge of Percy, it succeeds in several of these interviews in placing Percy firmly within the Covington milieu, largely through an accumulation of minor but revealing detail. We learn from Judy LaCour, a teacher at St. Paul's School in Covington in the 1970's and 80's, that Percy frequently visited her high-school English classes (at her invitation) and spoke enthusiastically with the students there about the questions raised in his novels, and that the school now annually honors its outstanding English student by adding his or her name to a plaque that features a picture of Percy and his dog, Sweet Thing. We learn from Lee Barrios, who typed Percy's manuscripts for several years and who describes herself as having been "heavy-duty into the Bible" in those days, that he was particularly concerned that his novels might offend her. Shyly, and sometimes stuttering, he would tap on the door of the room where she worked in the Percy house and ask, "Lee, having any problems?" or say, "Well, I hope you're not embarrassed by any of the characters in there." From Carrie Cyprian, the Percy's black housekeeper and cook, we discover that Dr. Percy once repaired one of her Thanksgiving turkeys with his surgical kit and that he loved her fried liver smothered in onions and her squash pie. Cyprian also talks about an occasion when Percy's dog turned up missing. When her husband found the dog and returned it, Percy gave him a signed copy of *The Last Gentleman*, a novel that Cyprian never read and twice calls *Gentleman, Gentleman*.

Ironically, the most entertaining of the interviews with Covington locals is the one from which we learn the least about Percy himself. Harwell interviewed John "Red" Smith, tradesman and raconteur, at his family hardware business in downtown Covington. Smith provides a wealth of anecdotal information about the 19th-century origins of Covington, its commercial history, and its more recent transformation into a bedroom community for commuters who work in New Orleans.

> I tell you what, though, they got some people coming over from New Orleans now, and they're bringing New Orleans over here. . . . They come over here, and they say, "This is the way we did it in New Orleans." Well, why in the hell did they leave New Orleans?

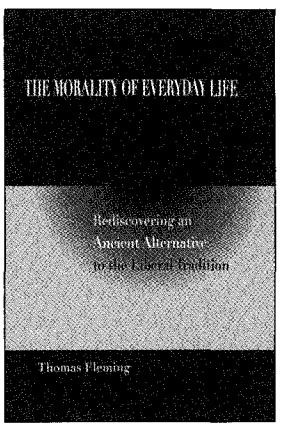
Asked how well the people of the town knew Percy, Smith says, "He never associated too much with my type of person because I ain't an intellectual. He was, and he'd associate with the Friends of the Library, people of that nature." Later in the interview, however, Smith admits that Percy invited him to the house on several occasions, though he never did pay a visit. He claims that, before Percy's death, he didn't even know that Per-

The Morality of Everyday Life:
Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.



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cy wrote books. "The only thing I know about him, is that he called Covington a 'non-place,'" Smith adds. "I wasn't quite sure why he stayed here because a 'non-place,' in my definition, would be an undesirable place. So why'd he come over here to a non-place to live?"

Given his intention of providing a portrait of Percy's life and community involvement in Covington, it is unfortunate that Harwell did not interview more Covingtonites of "Red" Smith's ilk. It is notable that only 8 of these 13 interviewees are (or were) Covington residents. The five remaining interviews, all clustered in the second half of the book, offer precious little insight into Percy's life in the town. These include lengthy interviews with "bootleg preacher" and longtime friend of Percy, Will Campbell; Shelby Foote; and Phin Percy, Walker's youngest brother; as well as somewhat shorter conversations with LeRoy Percy (another brother) and Rhoda Faust, owner of the Maple Street Book Shop in New Orleans. And while all of these interviews provide some valuable details about Percy's relationship, for example, with his revered Greenville uncle, William Alexander Percy (who reared the Percy brothers after the deaths of their parents), or about Percy's literary influences, one has to wade through a good deal of irrelevant material to find out those details. I, for one, am not particularly interested in Campbell's friendship with country singer Waylon Jennings or his childhood as a dirt-poor Baptist in Amite County, Mississippi. Similarly, Shelby Foote's legendary loquacity is here, as elsewhere, merely tedious at times, though he is occasionally interesting on literary matters. He notes, for example, that, from childhood (Foote and Percy became friends when both were still adolescents in Greenville), he had always been "a great champion of Tolstoy," while Percy was a diehard defender of Dostoyevsky. Foote loved to "infuriate [Percy] by saying that Dostoevsky was the greatest slick writer that ever lived," and claims that, decades later, Percy admitted, "You were right about Dostoevsky." Sadly, however, we never learn just why Foote thought Dostoyevsky a "slick writer" or why Percy came to agree. Harwell simply fails to pursue the matter.

Students of Percy's life and work will no doubt find *Walker Percy Remembered* a welcome, if somewhat redundant, addition to their bookshelves. It is clearly a labor of love and respect, and for that reason alone I wish that I could give it a more wholehearted endorsement. On the whole, this "community biography" does, by fits and starts, manage "to flesh out the character of [Percy] in the context of his community, his closest friends, and his family" (though Percy's widow, Bunt, chose not to be interviewed). I do wish, though, that Harwell had done a little less "muting of the authorial voice" and had intervened a little more often and a touch more aggressively during the course of these interviews.

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

Unreal Men, Unreal Times

by Clark Stooksbury

Real Men: Ten Courageous Americans to Know and Admire
by R. Cort Kirkwood
Nashville: Cumberland House; 188 pp., $12.95

◆

There is no question that the concept of manhood is a shell of what it once was. In popular culture, men are depicted as being slightly dim-witted, obsessed with video games, sports, and fast food. "Guys," we are told, rush to Hardees because they can't fix their own breakfast. Although one can see a great deal of macho posturing on the set of an NFL pre-game show or pickup commercial, outside of R. Cort Kirkwood's new book, real men are hard to find these days.

Kirkwood places considerable blame on Hollywood for the collapse of manhood but notes that "men were in charge when the foes of masculinity and manhood marched by in the night and sacked our institutions . . . " He paraphrases Garet Garrett, the uncompromising critic of the New Deal: "Some still believe they hold the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road. But they are gazing in the wrong direction. The revolution is behind them."

Although the reasons are no doubt very complex, I would place considerable blame on the postwar prosperity that removed much of the struggle from life. Material comforts are widely available, and few men do rough physical labor these days. Prosperity is good, but the downside is that, as life becomes easier, it has a tendency to become less satisfying. This is evident in the desire for physical challenge among the stockbrokers and lawyers who engage in dangerous activities, such as mountain climbing, for sport.

Kirkwood intends to keep the flame of manhood alive by remembering sterling examples of the past. *Real Men* is a collection of ten profiles from American history—nine of whose subjects the culturally literate reader will at least have heard of. The tenth is Rocky Versace, an American soldier executed by the North Vietnamese in 1965. The list is dominated by men who fought in wars, but raw physical courage isn't the only characteristic of Kirkwood's subjects, who tended also to exhibit a tremendous sense of leadership and piety.

One who stands out is Lou Gehrig. Today, professional sports is a repugnant spectacle that extends from thuggish players ("the criminal, the crybaby, or the steroidically fortified multimillionaire") to clownish owners, coaches, and commentators. (Kirkwood contrasts Gehrig's dignity with a more recent and mercifully unnamed player who threw a crying fit upon failing to be elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown.) Lou Gehrig's claim to fame over and above his greatness as a player—especially the 2,130 consecutive-game streak that remained a major-league record for more than 50 years—was the way he handled his fate when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. It is difficult to face such a painful, and painfully unfair, death with dignity and courage, yet Gehrig did so in public.

Audie Murphy is another of Kirkwood's real men. His exploits in battle well qualify him—Murphy was the most highly decorated American soldier of World War II—for this honor. Murphy's story is classically American. He grew up as the son of sharecroppers in Texas, in a family so poor that Audie was "one Texan who never had a pair of cowboy boots." When the United States entered World War II, Murphy joined the Army after the Marine Corps found him to be too scrawny. So great were Murphy's feats in combat that Kirkwood suspects most readers would find their depiction unbelievable and inauthentic if they appeared in fiction.

The postwar Audie Murphy whom Kirkwood describes is a man who looked for trouble—and often found it. He once

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pulled a gun on a "Dago" at a horse track (Murphy had problems with gambling) and told him that killing one more Italian wouldn't make any difference to him. On a Hollywood movie set, Murphy, who had appeared in a number of films, was annoyed by an actor who flattered himself as a quick draw. Murphy offered to prove his skills using live cartridges. Kirkwood writes that a

> fair appraisal of Murphy's postwar deeds might suggest a physiologically troubled man. To some degree he was. He suffered nightmares and became addicted to sleeping pills, but ever the tenacious warrior, he locked himself in a hotel room and defeated the addiction. He candidly discussed the psychological damage war inflicts on a man, openly trying to help other veterans overcome what was then called battle fatigue and now called post-traumatic stress disorder. War took its toll on Murphy and thousands of other combat veterans.

In his famous essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," William James wrote that "Militarism is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible." James favored sending young men to something akin to a Civilian Conservation Corps to develop the manly virtues, after which "they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation." Kirkwood notes that the subjects of *Real Men* were made by the "cultural milieu in which they are raised." When the President (who preferred political campaigning to fulfilling his obligations to the National Guard) and his hawkish neoconservative Vice President (a serial draft dodger) are happy to send American boys and girls to die for "democracy" in the Middle East, it is safe to say that our culture is no longer hospitable to James' "ideals of hardihood."

Instead, our culture is hospitable to metrosexuals, swooning neocons, Xbox geeks, and graying perpetual adolescents. Kirkwood's book reminds us of real men—and the culture that produced them.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

The Empire Quacks

by Jerry Woodruff

Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors
by Charles S. Maier
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 373 pp., $27.95

◆

By comparing America to the empires of the ancient world and Europe, Charles Maier has attempted to answer the question, Is America an empire? While his book reveals an author of immense learning, *Among Empires* is unsatisfying, not only because Maier answers his question in the negative—after presenting a great deal of evidence that seems to suggest otherwise—but because of what he hints at but fails to address.

In scattered moments, Maier seems oddly concerned with the historical role of empire in what he calls "inequality," a hand-wringing refrain in any liberal's songbook. In his Prologue, Maier alerts the reader to his moral sentiments. If we have in fact become an empire, "Do we make it more or less likely that the peoples of poorer nations will share in, or be excluded from, economic development and welfare?" That sort of inquiry seems better suited to ideologues than to historians. Maier insists that an empire is not simply a superstate, nor "just a state that subjugates other peoples or states," but "a system of rule that transforms society at home as it stabilizes inequality transnationally by replicating it geographically, in the core and on the periphery." He believes that this inequality is an unintentional by-product of empire: "The divisions it intensifies along its frontier or the skewed rewards it distributes among its citizens at home amount to unplanned inequality." In empires, inequality (by which Maier means material or income inequality) becomes stabilized because empires encompass differentiations that are thereby somehow preserved. In his discussion of how empires organize their economic activity, he concludes that "the structure and inequalities of empire recapitulate themselves at all levels of international, national, and local activity . . ."

The observation seems shallow. Isn't it true that, in general, the inequalities of life "recapitulate themselves" at all levels of human and even animal activity? Why the inequalities of empire are particularly noteworthy is startlingly unclear.

Maier begins one chapter by asking if there is a uniquely violent aspect to imperial rule, hoping to determine whether empires might generate a "different pattern or spectrum of violent acts . . . or a cheapening and brutalization of life in general." Some 20-odd pages later, after breezy descriptions of bloody warfare from the Peloponnesian War to Bosnia to mass exterminations in Rwanda and the Sudan, he simply concludes that "Such a determination remains out of reach." I cannot help but wonder why he brought up the subject in the first place.

The broad sweep of knowledge Maier brings to his discussion allows him to offer enticing insights—though, unfortunately, he leaves some of the most promising ones unexplored. Maier claims one purpose of his book is to glean lessons from the past for guidance in the present, adding that comparing Rome and the United States is especially useful in discerning "parallels with and lessons for the contemporary United States." So it is particularly relevant when Maier suggests that it was "the cohesion of their legions," not technological skill, that constituted the Romans' decisive military superiority in the ancient world. Here, perhaps, is a lesson for contemporary American military leaders—but such is not forthcoming. Instead, Maier casually notes that Roman military superiority waned in the later days of the empire because its armies "no longer had the ethnic cohesiveness of earlier forces." He attaches no importance to that observation. As used by Maier, "ethnic cohesiveness" is just another way of saying "loyalty to Rome." The late Roman Empire had come to depend heavily on soldiers recruited or conscripted from foreign lands, whose allegiance sometimes shifted from Rome to the chiefs of their tribal kin, even while they were under Roman command. What lessons this might portend for multicultural America—which continually embraces a massive influx of foreign populations whose diversity rivals the variegated hordes that populated late imperial Rome—Maier does not say.

Maier is far more thorough in his discussion of whether the United States shares enough of the attributes of historical examples of empire to qualify as one. The United States, Maier concludes, is not (yet) an empire "at home" and has no territorial empire that it administers abroad. Unfortunately, he does not ex-

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plain why these two criteria are more important than other possible ones. True enough, the United States has no emperor or dynastic succession, and her formal rulers are elected freely (or, perhaps more accurately, they freely arrange to get themselves elected). And, indeed, the United States does not directly administer any vast contiguous territorial provincial system that constitutes a frontier defining who is inside, and who is outside, the empire. But are these qualifications really necessary to constitute an empire in the modern world?

Maier acknowledges that the notion of empire is not a scientific concept and that empire itself "is not a single or coherent phenomenon," and he suggests that America may preside over a "post-territorial" empire in which frontiers and control of land space are unnecessary in a world where financial institutions, media conglomerates, and miscellaneous corporations hold sway, protected by the world's most powerful military. He questions, though (and with some justification), whether private money-making organizations are properly considered part of America's national power. Maier does not consider, however, whether modern communications, transportation, and technologically advanced military organization have altered the meaning of *frontier*. In reality, the American frontier—that is, the locations where those without the empire can enter it—might well be defined as wherever there is an airport and a State Department embassy to issue travel visas. Penetrating this virtual border is simply a matter of acquiring a few pieces of paper—a passport, a plane ticket. In this sense, America's frontier lies as much in Jakarta and Calcutta and Moscow as it does along the Rio Grande.

In the premodern era, empires needed to control the land across which they marched their armies. Without control of territory (or of sea lanes), armies could not march or sail to enforce the empire's will. No longer: Force projection today, at least for technologically advanced America, rests primarily on strategically located refueling depots for planes and ships. That is why President Franklin Roosevelt demanded—and got—leasing rights for military bases across the globe in exchange for warships sent to Winston Churchill in 1940, long before the United States entered World War II.

The "territory" of a modern empire may be described as whatever the homeland will defend. In this respect, the territorial system of America's empire has an extensive frontier. Under Article V of the treaty that created NATO, the United States must regard an attack on any member as an attack on herself. Those member states that we will defend to the death include Canada, Iceland, Britain, France, Holland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Turkey, Greece, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. And the NATO territories are not the only portions of the globe that the United States regards as extensions of herself: More than 30,000 U.S. troops still protect South Korea, while, according to the Treaty of Rio, we are pledged to defend nearly any country in the Western Hemisphere, excepting Cuba. No power in all of human history—"empire" or not—has ever been militarily committed to protecting such a massive portion of the earth.

Maier affirms that "Imperial power is power that can be brought to bear far away with no loss of energy because of the distance." There can be little doubt that America exercises such power. In his discussion of Roman military proficiency, Maier explains that what was crucial to Rome's long-term imperial success was "the ability to project power far from the capital. This involved the capacity to keep or to raise military forces . . . along long and far flung frontiers." For this reason, the efficient movement of troops was the real impetus for the construction of Rome's famed road system; trade and commerce were secondary. Historian Chalmers Johnson writes that, in 2001, the United States maintained no fewer than 725 far-flung overseas bases. Only imperial force projection and the desire to defend the vast NATO configuration, as well as regions in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, can explain why U.S. forces are stationed in such places as Keflavik, Iceland, 50 years after World War II and more than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A modern imperial power need not have entire jurisdiction in a country in which its base is located. The mere presence of that base is enough, especially when added to sufficient influence on the local government, to allow access to jurisdiction through friendly persuasion, bribery, blackmail, or coercion. Americans have been especially good at obtaining access to bases, as Maier helpfully explains:

> Empire is a form of political organization in which the social elements that rule in the dominant state—the "mother country" or the "metropole"—create a network of allied elites in regions abroad who accept subordination in international affairs in return for the security of their position in their own administrative unit . . .

Substitute "country" for "administrative unit," and the way in which American foreign policy operates in such places as the Middle East becomes quite clear.

Maier believes that "an empire will punish defectors from its control," while a nonimperial hegemonic power such as the United States "will do no more than rely on common interests and moral suasion." He reminds us that, when confronted with rebellion by the city-state of Mytilene, the Athenians slaughtered all its men and sold its women into slavery. He offers other examples from ancient to modern times that, in his opinion, exempt the United States from being classified as an empire because she abstains from engaging in that level of brutality.

This argument is not persuasive. Maier himself points out that the British, who did indeed create an empire, "in most cases shrank from such measures" against colonial peoples. And he neglects to mention the heavy punishment accorded by Britain and the United States to Japan and Germany, who posed a threat to imperial Britain's domination and America's own global aspirations. It is significant that the bombings of Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki were directed at civilians, mostly women and children, not uniformed combatants. These bombings had no military purpose but a political and propagandistic one. The message delivered was the same as that sent by the slaughter of the Mytilenians: Don't challenge our dominance.

In Maier's world, though America may look like an empire and act like an empire, she is really only a global "hegemon"—a distinction without a practical difference. In the real world of history and politics, behavior—not abstract categories, definitions, and lists of attributes—is decisive. In the real world, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, odds are you have a duck on your hands, no matter what you call it.

Jerry Woodruff is the editor of Middle American News.

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by Aaron D. Wolf

A Threat to Our Very Way of Life

Here's a heresy for you. A grave danger is lurking among us, caused by certain people who are spreading lies—and in the name of Christianity! So grave is this danger that it threatens our very way of life. And, as one of our great leaders once said, "The American way of life is not negotiable."

We are, of course, talking about the threat of babies, and the strain that having them puts on us as Americans, particularly white people. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, the Managerial Revolution, and the World Wide Webolution, the world has changed, and we just cannot have unrestrained marital sex and produce large, unruly families like we did in days of yore, back when land was cheap, a man could earn a living for his wife and children, and those children (because of the slave labor they endured) were considered an economic asset. Today, we live by a higher standard: Chattel-children are a thing of the past, and plasma televisions are considered economic assets. Women are no longer bound by the constraints of having multiple children; no career in business, House speakering, or freedom-spreading; and nothing to do but keep a house and clothe and feed children and husband. In today's nonnegotiable America, a woman can create a company called Baby Einstein, which produces educational enrichment (babysitting) DVDs for children ages six months to three years old; sell the company to Disney for a secret all-cash amount (reportedly $25 million); then be recognized in the gallery during the President's State of the Union Address as a "talented business entrepreneur." You've come a long way . . . Lady!

Now, there are the naysayers out there who point out that, yes, according to estimates just released by the CIA's World Factbook, women in the United States are actually reproducing slightly below replacement level (2.1). These nabobs are just ignorant of the facts and lack the optimism that makes America great. After all, thanks to the influx of Mexican immigrants (they are the most fertile, followed by non-Hispanic black African-Americans, followed by Asian-Americans), we have gained one one-hundredth of a baby per woman (2.09, up from 2.08 in 2005), and we are closing in on communist North Korea, where Comrade Kim has sat right on the replacement level for two years in a row. Watch out, Argentina (2.16) and South Africa (2.2)!

Then again, the ninnies point out that this downward trend in having babies is affecting our churches as well. They point to a 2005 study by three researchers (Michael Hout of the University of California-Berkley, Andrew Greeley of the University of Arizona, and Melissa Wilde of Indiana University) that indicates that the massive decline in every Protestant denomination in the United States can be explained by declining fertility rates. According to their study, the fact that fertility rates among more conservative denominations are now the same as among the Mainline liberals explains why conservatives can no longer claim that they are growing (while the Mainlines are shrinking) because of their conservative stance on abortion, homosexuality, *etc.*

Nonetheless, we cannot let these startling statistics cause us to lose sight of reality: The threat of babies is as real today as it was 85 years ago, when Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, wrote *The Pivot of Civilization*, in which she clarified that,

> As a social programme, Birth Control is not merely concerned with population questions. . . . It looks for the liberation of the spirit of woman and through woman of the child. To-day motherhood is wasted, penalized, tortured. Children brought into the world by unwilling mothers suffer an initial handicap that cannot be measured by cold statistics. Their lives are blighted from the start.

In his Introduction to Sanger's *Pivot*, Mr. H.G. Wells declares that the threat of babies is at the heart of a clash of civilizations: the Traditional or Authoritative Civilization *versus* the Creative and Progressive one. The former

> rests upon the thing that is, and upon the thing that has been. It insists upon respect for custom and usage; it discourages criticism and enquiry. It is very ancient and conservative, or, going beyond conservation, it is reactionary. . . .
>
> Said the Ancient Civilization—and it says it still through a multitude of vigorous voices and harsh repressive acts: "Let man learn his duty and obey." Says the New Civilization, with ever-increasing confidence: "Let man know, and trust him."

Certain men, however, cannot be trusted, particularly a group of "Christians" who deny the menacing threat of babies, and who claim that they are doing God's will by having children. They belong to something called the Quiver-Full Movement, which takes its name from Psalm 127:

> Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them . . .

In their primitive understanding, they read this to mean that a "man" will be "happy" if he has many "children"—and that this "reward" comes from "the LORD."

But they don't stop there: They also insist that birth control is a sin—a ridiculous notion easily dispelled by the theologians of all major Protestant denominations decades ago. Of course, the nagging nincompoops are right about one thing: During the oppressive days of the Authoritative Civilization, every theologian, from Augustine to Aquinas, Luther to Calvin, Wesley to Spurgeon, condemned contraception as a sin against natural law—a rejection of the obvious purpose (though not the only benefit) of postmarital sex.

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But, as the dawn of the New Civilization broke out all over the Western world, theologians could finally stop believing in natural law and the unbroken tradition of reading Scripture as if it did exist.

Thankfully, a recent episode of ABC-News' *Nightline* exposed the threat of the baby people. *Nightline*'s Martin Bashir (distinguished for his riveting exposé "Living With Michael Jackson") gravely introduced the segment "When Having Kids is a Religious Experience" with the chilling statement, "It's a movement that believes it has the blessing of God on its side."

Nightline correspondent John Berman's piece centers on a white (of course!) family, the Carpenters, who have eight (eight!) children in (where else?) Tennessee, and Berman says that they are part of the Quiver-Full Movement. And while, yes, it is difficult to call this a "movement" in a technical sense, since there "is no official organization," you may be stunned to learn that *Quiverfull.com* has grown to a whopping 2,600 members in just 12 short years!

"We'll take as many children—happily—as God chooses to bless us with," declares Ken Carpenter, while his neatly dressed wife, Devon, slaves over a hot stove (what else can a woman do over a hot stove?), cooking for this massive lot of seemingly happy, well-dressed, well-mannered children, in what Correspondent Berman describes as a "major operation."

It doesn't take long, however, for Margaret Sanger's pivotal truth to emerge, thanks to Correspondent Berman's careful questioning. It goes without saying that the Carpenter children are homeschooled. Of course, parents such as these fear the socialization that today's public schools offer. Going beyond conservatism, they are reactionary. But you cannot expect to be able to lock up these children for the rest of their lives, can you? What about college? How will you afford it?

While two little white girls wearing dresses (no SpongeBob T-shirts for these children!) peel potatoes in the background, Mr. Carpenter informs Correspondent Berman that they are "considering alternatives" to college. His main concern is that his boys will be able to make a living, instead of being treated to the intellectual stimulation (*Vagina Monologues*) that only a college campus can offer. Of course, "If God calls them to a profession that requires a degree," they will find a way.

Quick as a fox, Correspondent Berman darts: "You said 'your sons'—what about your daughters?"

Carpenter, exposed as a misogynist, replies, "I don't have all of the answers, John, but . . . I do know this: A woman's highest calling is motherhood, and that's a countercultural notion today."

It comes as no surprise, then, when Berman notes, in a voice-over, that these baby-loving Quiver people have something else in common: They think that a man should be the head of his household. "Ken is the undisputed leader of the family." And Devon—perhaps a victim of Stockholm Syndrome—doesn't bat an eyelash, her mind and body having been ravaged by eight babies. Concealing her haggard, frustrated, demeaned self under an attractive, all-too-happy persona, she agrees that her role, according to the Bible, is to be "nurturing and loving and submissive to my husband and shepherding to the children."

It doesn't take a statistical genius to see that this baby-loving heresy threatens our Progressive Civilization—our nonnegotiable way of life. Our (Christian) women may be reproducing below the replacement level, but, if Margaret Sanger taught us anything, it is that we cannot afford to allow certain people to overpopulate. ©

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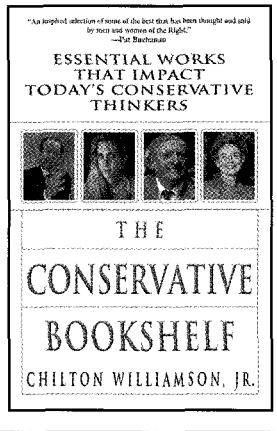

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Letter From Cork

by Christie Davies

The Polonization of Ireland

◆

Recently, I returned to dear old Cork after exactly ten years' absence. What 50 years ago had been a poor town on the periphery of Ireland is now a big, thriving, growing, wealthy city.

As I was conveyed from the airport to the city center, I asked the driver, "Anything changed round here recently?"

"Immigrants," he replied, "Poles, tens of thousands of them, particularly in the building industry. There is no pick-and-shovel work for an Irishman anymore. Most of them can't speak an English such that you can understand them. They are fanatically religious, and they are bringing their priests with them. A lot of them have a drink problem. If you ask me, they are taking over the place." I had the feeling that I had heard all this in a totally different context, some 50 years ago, but it seemed a bit tactless to mention such a thing in rebel Cork.

When I arrived at the town, I found that it was indeed full of Poles. In the streets, you could hear Polish spoken everywhere: You can't miss it; it sounds rather like Czech. There were Polish notices in all of the shop windows. I was later to be assured by a mathematician at the university that there would soon be 400,000 Poles in Ireland, constituting ten percent of the Irish population.

In town, as I walked along the quays, I could remember Irish people emigrating by the thousands, all of them eager to get on the boat to the ports of Wales and the jobs of England—the black-mouthed molarless men of Kerry off to find a job in the construction industry or in the car-manufacturing plants; the women to become nurses and to search eagerly for an English bachelor more ardent for marriage than the shy, reluctant farmers' sons of Ireland. It was a process that had gone on for 300 years with peasants from the west and the far south of Ireland heading for Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow—and, later, for Birmingham, Kilburn, and Dagenham. They built, in turn, Britain's canals, railroads, and freeways. There are as many as six million people of Irish descent in Britain, and they make up ten percent of the total British population, which is a far higher proportion than in the United States. Now, however, emigration has come to an end. Indeed, it has gone into reverse, and Nigerians and Somalis are settling in Dublin; most of all, however, there are the Poles. Even the bartenders are Polish.

From a Polish point of view, Ireland is a paradise. A Polish graduate can earn several times as much money doing an unskilled job in Cork as he would as a professional in Poland. A bricklayer's hod carrier or a waitress can earn as much in two months in Ireland as she would in an entire year back home, and she often gets paid in cash with a fistful of euros, which translates into a fortune in złotys. After countries from Eastern Europe began to join the European Union, there was supposed to be a free movement of labor from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic states to the established E.U. states. However, France, Germany, and other Western European countries that have both high unemployment and disagreeable and discontented immigrant minorities—many of them Muslims—refused to accept workers from Eastern Europe. The Poles could only go to Britain or to Ireland. Many have gone to Britain, where they do not pose a problem, since England already has a well-established Polish community. Most of them came during World War II as part of General Anders' army and fought on the British side, notably as gallant RAF pilots. Everyone in Britain guiltily remembers the strong attempts made by British leftists in the mid-1940's to expel the Poles and send them back to Eastern Europe for fear that, if they were allowed to remain, they would be a source of anticommunist sentiment and anti-Soviet agitation in Britain. The Labour government of 1945 let them stay but forced them to work in occupations that none of the local people wanted. A loyal ally was betrayed; it would not now look or feel good to deny them twice.

Ireland, of course, was neutral during World War II, and Polish leaders who visited there in 1939 found that there was little sympathy for invaded Poland, whose woes were seen as less than Ireland's own hardships, which included the rationing of tea imports from Britain. In Ireland today, there is no fund of guilt to be exploited. Besides, Britain has long been full of foreigners, most of them far stranger and more troublesome than the Poles will ever be, and has grown accustomed to the curse of multiculturalism. Happy, homogeneous Ireland, by contrast, was, until recently, perhaps the least plural society in the world, so the Poles are much more likely to be resented.

The day after I arrived at Cork, I took the bus to Kinsale for the sheer pleasure of being back and chatted amicably with my fellow passengers—all from the East—about how much I had enjoyed my time lecturing in the sophisticated cities of Kraków and Wrocław. In Kinsale, I visited the local Catholic church and noticed that, even there, many of the exhortatory pamphlets were in Polish. Even that most Hibernian of journals, the *Irish Catholic*, now has a Polish section, which takes up about one third of its space. There is, at most, a paragraph in Erse; even in the English section, the main news in the old September issue lurking on the rack was about the visit of His Eminence Józef Cardinal Glemp, spiritual guardian of the Polish emigration, to St. Audoen's Church, Dublin, to which was appended a discussion of the steady influx of priests from Poland.

It will not be long before most of the priests in Ireland are Polish. There was a time when Ireland provided priests for the rest of the world—particularly for England, Wales, and Scotland. Today, there are no new vocations in Ireland. Between 1966 and 1996, the number of vocations to become diocesan clergy fell by nearly 80 percent; to clerical religious orders, by 90 percent. In 1966, there were nearly 600 vocations to orders of religious sisters in Ireland; in 1996, only 19—and there was only one vocation to the various orders of religious brothers. Ireland is no longer the leading Catholic country in Northern Europe. That honor now belongs to Poland, where vocations are numerous, the prestige of the clergy is high, and there is a willingness to serve the Church abroad in countries such as Ireland that lack priests. At present, many of the Polish priests in Ireland serve Polish congregations, but, in a generation, most Irish parishioners will find that their parish priest is Polish.

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The Poles have come to the rescue of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Otherwise, some of Her leaders might, in time, have been tempted to consider advocating the desperate alternatives embraced by the churches of the Anglican communion, the Church of England and the Episcopal church, first of allowing male priests to marry (a mere breach of a regulation) and, later, of permitting the ordination of women, something abhorrent to the Christian tradition. Even the archbishop of Canterbury can now see that this is a problem. The very thought of such things happening in Ireland must horrify every Irish traditionalist; the Polish solution is preferable.

It follows that, a further generation forward, the bishops in Ireland will also be Polish. The existing priests and bishops in Ireland are elderly, and the numerous pedophile scandals have led to the stigmatization of a clerical career. Besides which, the Irish have learned the strange joys of sexual promiscuity. In this country where contraception was once prohibited by law, there are now condom machines in every public place, including the university and the airport in Cork. One out of three firstborn children is illegitimate. In the past, the first task of the Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) upon attaining office was to kiss the archbishop of Dublin's ring as a token of his submission to the Church, and any kind of marital infidelity would have meant the end of his career. The current Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, a married man of Cork lineage better known as Pádraig Parthalán Ó hEachthairn, was publicly criticized by the then-archbishop of Dublin, Desmond Cardinal Connell, for the open nature of his sexual relationship with a female activist of his party. The archbishop declared that, as a separated father living with a mistress, he was a dreadful example to the young people of Ireland. Yet he remains prime minister. Can Ireland still be regarded as a truly Roman republic as it was in the days of Eamonn de Valera?

Although abortion is still prohibited by the Irish constitution, the wording pertaining to it is ambiguous, and some forms of contraception, such as IUDs—essentially a form of very early abortion—are legal and are regularly provided by Irish doctors.

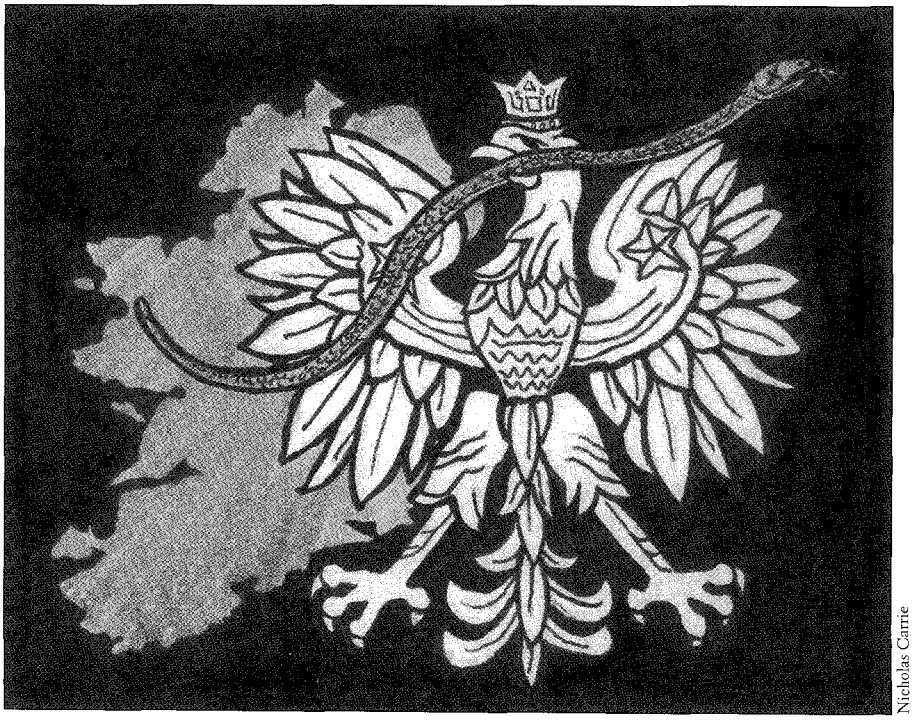
A former Irish High Court judge, Rory O'Hanlon, complained in 2002 to Cardinal Re, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops in Rome, about the Irish government's attitude toward the wording of the Irish referendum and legislation concerning abortion. Ten years earlier, he had been sacked from his post as president of the Irish Law Commission for expressing his fear that Irish membership in the European Union would endanger the purity and security of the basic laws prohibiting abortion.

Besides, there is a steady stream of pregnant Irish women taking the boat from Dublin to Liverpool to obtain abortions. Sometimes, they even return on the same day. Sailors on the ferries routinely refer to the women they see coming back as the "empties." Nothing is being done to prevent or even impede this trade. A sexual revolution in Ireland has destroyed the former moral monopoly enjoyed by the Church, and it is impossible to get young people to take the ideas of chastity and priestly celibacy seriously. In Poland, however, the old values of piety and self-sacrifice persist, so it is Polish priests for Ireland.

The Poles who are settling in Ireland are far more likely to retain their identity and language than did those earlier generations of Poles who went to Britain, France, or the United States. For a Polish immigrant in Detroit or Chicago in 1900, it was almost impossible to go back and forth to Poland regularly. Now, there are direct flights from Dublin to Warsaw and five other Polish cities, as well as a cheap and speedy bus service that makes use of a ferry to England and the Channel Tunnel. Entire busloads of new Polish immigrants arrive every day. Because both Ireland and Poland are members of the European Community, as soon as the Polish immigrants set foot in Ireland, they are entitled to the same rights as a native-born Irish citizen. Ireland could have opted out of this, as France and Germany did, but the Irish government chose not to, because it wanted to import cheap labor. The new Poles are never going to go home, because earnings levels and welfare provisions are far more generous in Ireland. Yet, because it is so easy to travel back and forth to Poland, the Poles now settling in Ireland can easily retain their Polish connections, language, and identity. This situation resembles that of Mexicans coming to the United States, who are able to retain their language, culture, and Mexican identity because of the freedom with which they can cross the U.S. border.

As the Poles come to dominate Ireland, imposing their language and culture on the country, they will (unlike Mexicans in the United States) be saving that distressful nation and restoring her respect for virtue and authority. The wise men have arrived from the East, perhaps just in time.

Dr. Christie Davies has been a frequent lecturer at a number of Polish universities and recently gave the inaugural Herb and Barbara Cummings lecture at University College, Cork. He is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain, *which also discusses Ireland.*



Nicholas Carrie

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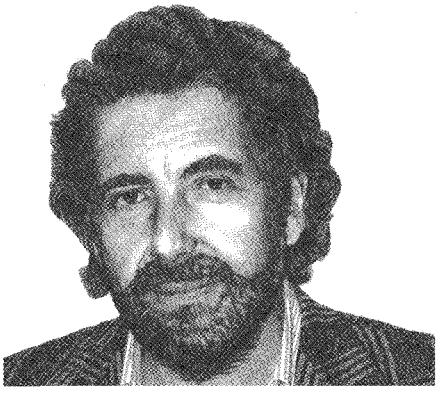
by Andrei Navrozov

A Political Honeymoon



I had fallen in love with Italy because she was my twin, my mirror image, my other half. Like me, she wanted to sit between two chairs, to have her *torta della nonna* and eat it, too. She sought to arrest the dissolution of society by progressive, that is to say capitalist, fictions; yet she wanted her showgirls spangled with sequins, cash on the barrel and price no object. Alone in Europe, she was unbowed before the triumphal progress of American futurism and ready to throw every spanner to hand into her works, including an unhelpful attitude to authority, reminiscent of that of the Old Believers to the established church in Russia, and an equally ambiguous attitude to labor, reminiscent of the old Soviet joke: "We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us." Conversely, she was the European polity that put the highest premium on fetishes of womanhood, without, however, allowing the revolutionary longing for an American-style sex-and-shopping phantasmagoria to become the prime mover of social organization; clinging stubbornly all the while to such resources of emotional satisfaction as neighbor and friend, food and family, promenade and song. If Italy had done it, why couldn't I?

Here beauty was sovereign. *Bello*, said the middle-aged, balding accountant in a green barbour, fondling an electrical insulator of white industrial porcelain in the confusion of a street market as though it were an ancient amphora. *Bella*, said the society hostess of somebody else's daughter, tall, thin, with sparkling green eyes, engaged to a third-division footballer. So said the passerby as he stopped to examine the contents of a fisherman's bucket by the bank of a muddy and slow-flowing stream. So said the bridegroom on seeing his bride in white. So said the sky, the dirt, and the Alpine snow in March; so said the rough sea in Advent and the grass at Easter.

Grapes and olives, almonds and lemons. No, they are not the same God-made things as turnips and potatoes: They are made by another, a better God, or at least a God in a better mood. And equally, the God-made people who watch the almond and the lemon blossom ripen and bear fruit, who see the olive pressed and the grape harvested, are not the same people who glance, through grimy windows of passing trains and sooty miles of habitual indifference, at fields of something or other, most likely coleseed rape, enlivened by an occasional silo or a water tower: Marx's people, Adam Smith's, nobody's. They lure prepubescent girls into basements, and nobody's surprised. They eat food from tins, and nobody's the wiser. Beauty, to them, is an abstraction, only exceeded in scope by that of life. Their total alienation from reality, in its conception, in its fruition, and in all its intermediate phases, is very nearly complete. This has made them ready for totalitarianism, and lo, a revolution to bring it about is long in progress.

Such were my feelings about Italy. It was as though the sun of civilization would still shed the occasional life-giving ray upon this land after it had all but set elsewhere, plunging the earth into primordial gloom. What better place for a honeymoon laden with meaning? Obviously, I saw that the same processes at work in America, and in the rest of Europe, and indeed in my very own psyche, were at work here, uprooting the olive groves of consciousness in different geographical parts of the country at different speeds, perhaps, yet uprooting them nonetheless, like some unstoppable steam plow commissioned from James Watt by Moloch himself.

Historically, the variable speed attained by progress had been described in terms of an economic conflict between the industrial North and the agrarian South, but the more I traveled in Italy, the more clearly I saw that this had long ceased to be the case. The areas that best resisted progress were the isolated and mountainous Mafia-riddled lands of the South and the rugged, Alpine or pre-Alpine lands of the North; it was the verdant plains and the rolling hills of the country's soft-bellied middle that were swayed first and comparatively more easily. The Alto Adige and the Veneto clung to its customs, its dialects, and its ways of seeing the world no less tenaciously than did Sicily or Calabria; it was Bologna and Florence that had learned to speak bad English and spoke good Italian. A lousy espresso on the Lungarno was a glimpse of the future materializing in slow motion.

So, too, could the picturesque antitheses of long ago, with their gall-bitter synthesis of internecine struggle, civil war and revolution, be seen in retrospect for the hollow, merciless, Barmecide fictions they had been at conception: Roundheads and Cavaliers, Jacobins and Girondins, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Fascists and Communists, Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, and finally and perhaps most dramatically, East and West. Once plied like so many quack remedies, amplified by power for power's sake and sold to an ignorant public as patent cures for hopelessness and the common cold, in the end, they were little more than grotesquely elongated shadows of some politically popular intellectualizations, others sure to follow on their history of success.

And there and then, seeing that the fault line ran, not as formerly between the two ends, but now between the ends and the middle, I began to suspect that perhaps the sexual divide, the once biologically inviolable frontier between the sexes, is likewise an obsolete criterion for the telling apart of men and women; that a new social geography and an unorthodox morphology have perhaps come into being under the mounting pressure of American futurism; that, perhaps, it is by their attitude to the absolutes of life, rather than by any primary or secondary sexual characteristics, that some individuals retain the character of men and others of women; while the rest, quiet as clams and prostrate before the relativizing steam plow of progress, are fused together into a new, hermaphrodite life form, highly sexual yet genderless, avid for experience yet ignorant of beauty, clinging to existence yet insensible to life.

It is to them that the future belongs, I thought. It is to give some finished and final shape to their inchoate longings that the totalitarian revolution is come. ◁

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FILM

Goodbye, Mr. Bond

by Wayne Allensworth

Casino Royale

Produced by Barbara Broccoli, Andrew Noakes, and Anthony Waye
Directed by Martin Campbell
Screenplay by Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, and Paul Haggis
Based on the novel by Ian Fleming
Released by Columbia Pictures

It is with great trepidation and some sadness that I must announce that James Bond is dead. Granted, there is a capable actor named Daniel Craig playing a character named James Bond in *Casino Royale*, the 21st "official" picture in the series, but there are major problems with the film.

I do not mean to say that Martin Campbell has made a bad movie—he has made an engaging postmodern thriller with some interesting characters and plenty of action. This Bond is human, not a cartoonish cutout superhero whose adventures serve as an excuse for highlighting sci-fi gadgetry, leaving character and story by the narrative wayside—a stage the series has gone through a number of times in the past. In that regard, *Casino Royale* is more akin to one of my personal favorites (including both the novels and the films), *From Russia With Love*. The capable Mr. Campbell has not made a James Bond movie, however. Indeed, the film's creators were faced with an impossible task: to reinvent the Bond series, in effect restarting the timeline and narrative sequence in such a way as to engage 21st-century audiences.

Ian Fleming, like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with his great detective, Sherlock Holmes, created a character in James Bond who seemed real to his readers and, later, to moviegoers. The world Bond came from was rooted in the 19th century, a world that produced such latter-day "clubland" heroes as Richard Hannay and Bulldog Drummond; the villains Dr. No and Blofeld are direct descendants of Fu Manchu and Professor Moriarty. Like Holmes, Bond is quirky and set in his ways: As with Doyle's wonderful "consulting detective," Bond fans knew every detail of their hero's world. Bond always wore a dark-blue worsted-wool suit with a black knitted silk tie, for instance. He wore half-sleeved Sea Island cotton shirts. We knew that breakfast was Bond's favorite meal; what gun he carried; that he had a scar on his right cheek; and that he was the object of the affectionate disapproval (chiefly for his "womanizing") of his hoary British gentleman boss, known only as M. Commander Bond, R.N.V.R, flirted with the desirable Miss Moneypenny and inhabited a world both deadly and outlandishly exciting.

There are two ways a filmmaker might approach the Fleming material and the Bond character: One way, which was thankfully followed by the original Harry Saltzman-Albert Broccoli production team, would be to find the right actor, set a stylish tone, and have fun. As I wrote in my review of the first of the Pierce Brosnan Bond vehicles, *Goldeneye* (*Vital Signs*, March 1996), in the best of the Bond films, the charismatic Scotsman Sean Connery "was able to evoke the gentlemanly, but roguish, quality" of the clubland heroes of an earlier era, while adding a hard, postwar edge to the character. Like Fleming's creation, "Connery, tongue firmly in cheek, faced the most unlikely of villains with a sense of amused irony, but was nevertheless able to lend a seriousness to the role that seemed more realistic" to Cold War-era audiences. (*Goldeneye*, the best of the latter-day Bonds, was also directed by Martin Campbell.)

Without a doubt, Bond's escapades would have made Holmes and Hannay, not to mention Dr. Watson, blush. But Bond also had style. He was not The Man With No Name, a ".45-toting angel of death," but a tough guy who nonetheless lived by a code and a certain sense of honor. "Bond," I wrote back in 1996, "is a killer, but not a murderer." With Connery (and Brosnan in *Goldeneye*), the 007-film franchise achieved a sort of balance between seriousness and tongue-in-cheek high adventure, with stress on the latter. The production team was able to pull off the increasingly unlikely character's tales of derring-do and make moviegoers, like Fleming's readers, revel in Bondania: Our man liked his vodka martini shaken, not stirred; he traded quips with the delightful Desmond Llewellyn as gadget master Q; and he always announced himself as "Bond, James Bond."

Another way to film Bond would be to emphasize the ruthlessness and sometimes reflective guilt of the character. A filmmaker could emphasize the harsh actions of the character and the violence of the Fleming novels (dismissed as a combination of "sex, snobbery, and sadism" by critics), following the lead of film *noir* and "adult" westerns of the late 40's and 50's, a more realistic and tough-minded approach that was eventually superseded by the amoral carnage of Clint Eastwood's squint-and-kill "spaghetti westerns," followed by the savage brutality of "slasher" films. What else can one do with the Bond series in a world where one of the most popular fiction characters is serial killer Hannibal Lecter?

In *Casino Royale*, a young Bond has just earned his "00" prefix by registering two kills on an assignment. His boss is not the venerable Bernard Lee or a reasonable facsimile, but a quite unsympathetic, hard-nosed woman, played by Dame Judi Dench. (Her coming aboard as M in *Goldeneye* was a sure sign the series had outlived its time.) Craig's Bond is a fine impersonation of an SAS commando, desensitized to killing and the hard world he inhabits, full of terrorists, African warlords, and money launderers. He is attractive to certain women, but hardly suave. He is distant and cold, perhaps because he fears attachments in a world that seems so harsh and transient. He has little in the way of a sense of style, and his short-cropped hair advertises a military background. This Bond looks as if he would feel more comfortable in fatigues and combat boots than in a tuxedo.

Bond's assignment in *Casino Royale*, as in Fleming's 1953 novel, is to beat the villain Le Chiffre (played with brooding menace by Mads Mikkelson, Le Chiffre weeps blood from a deformed eyelid) at a card game, clean him out, and set him up: Le Chiffre can either turn himself over to the authorities and tell his secrets as a bankroller of terrorists and warlords or die at the latter's hands, having lost their millions in a high-stakes poker

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game (no baccarat for Craig's man-of-the-people character). Bond is accompanied by Vesper Lynd (played by the lovely Eva Green), a treasury agent in charge of his $10 million poker stake. In the course of the assignment and after some battle-of-the-sexes sparring between the two (suitably underplayed by both actors), Bond's emotional armor is penetrated by Vesper, herself resistant to personal attachment. The love affair ends in tragedy, as it did for Fleming's Bond. The author must have foreseen that it was far too soon to marry off 007.

After surviving brutal torture at the hands of Le Chiffre (the torture scene in Fleming's original prompted critics' recurring "sadism" charges) and witnessing Vesper's death, Craig's Bond straps on his emotional armor and, having been schooled in style by Vesper and having acquired some taste for the high life at the card tables of an exclusive casino, is transformed into . . . what? A jaded commando who likes to vacation in Cancun and play poker with rich people? A leathery veteran who sometimes wears a tuxedo, which his late lady love picked for him? What we are left with would be a strong ending for a one-off thriller with a *noir* sensibility, or even a BBC miniseries. Indeed, the filmmakers have made a noble attempt at restarting the Bond franchise by going back to its roots in Fleming's novel. But Daniel Craig is not James Bond. Indeed, he can't be, because the world the character lives in cannot make James Bonds. The filmmakers perhaps had no choice but to reinvent Bond as another postmodern Terminator, albeit one who can capture a degree of the audience's sympathy. Still, the letdown is inevitable.

The romance is gone. So are playfulness and irony, as well as the stylized characterization that Connery, perhaps the last of the old-fashioned movie stars, could pull off. This Bond looks more like Steve McQueen in *Bullitt* (though without McQueen's screen presence or charisma). The high adventure and *savoir faire* of big-screen swashbucklers from Fairbanks to Flynn to Connery is gone. In any case, Connery's impersonation of Bond was a throwback to a time that was already past when 007 faced the celluloid Dr. No in 1962. Gone are the days of Cary Grant and stars like him, dressed to the nines, carnation in lapel with Ingrid Bergman or Audrey Hepburn on his arm, fighting and making love, living dangerously and well. Nobody will leave the theater after *Casino Royale* humming Monty Norman's unforgettable James Bond theme. Nobody will want to be Craig's Bond. It may be time to end the series, leaving us to savor those memories of Saturday matinees, an Aston Martin with an ejector seat, Pussy Galore, Oddjob, SMERSH, SPECTRE, and M. In the words of Auric Goldfinger, as a deadly laser beam bore down on 007, "Goodbye, Mr. Bond."

Contributing editor Wayne Allensworth is the author of The Russian Question *(Rowan & Littlefield).*

THE NEW REPUBLIC

"If I May Interrupt": Live From the Senate Floor

by Jack Trotter

As any connoisseur of the manifest absurdities that daily emanate from *Inside the Beltway* is well aware, what we read in the venerable Congressional Record is not necessarily a verbatim account of what was stated, on any given day, by our lawmakers on the floors of the House or Senate. It is common practice to "emend" the Record with deletions or interpolations after the fact. While such alterations are supposed to be indicated, this is not always the case. An example of egregiously unacknowledged tampering occurred late last year when Senators Lindsay Graham (R-SC) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ) entered into the December 21 Record a "colloquy" between the two of them that was supposed to have transpired "live" on the Senate floor. The subject of debate on that day was the Detainee Treatment Act (DTA) (subsequently passed), which, among other things, removed from the Supreme Court any jurisdiction over pending cases brought by Guantanamo detainees—or so Senators Graham and Kyl, two of the DTA's sponsors, maintained. The problem is that the actual wording of the DTA is rather murky on this point, and it is only in the fabricated "colloquy" between the two senators that such an understanding of the DTA is clearly reflected in the debate leading up to its passage. During the debate, the third sponsor of the DTA, Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI), made authentically live statements that clearly ran contrary to those interpolated by Graham and Kyl.

Now, these playful senatorial shenanigans would have passed unnoticed had Graham and Kyl left well enough alone, but, in March 2006, *Slate.com* reported that the senators had, in late December 2005, cited their "colloquy" in an amicus brief filed with the Supreme Court, which was then considering *Hamdan* v. *Rumsfeld*, a case brought by Salim Ahmed Hamdan, a Guantanamo detainee and former driver of Osama bin Laden. In other words, Graham and Kyl, in an effort to influence the Court's decision, quoted their own fabricated statements in language implying that those statements had actually been uttered on the Senate floor—surely a case of the virtual swallowing up the real.

I have no intention here of considering the ethical implications of such practices, though it might be noted that Senators Graham and Kyl did not exactly set a good example for all those young scholars on our college campuses who are endlessly warned by their English instructors that fabricating quotations is a form of plagiarism. (Whether attributing said quotations to oneself is, strictly speaking, plagiarism is beyond the moral discernment of this writer.) Moreover, one might readily agree with Justice Antonin Scalia, who noted in his dissenting opinion in *Hamdan* that the distinction between live and interpolated testimony

> makes no difference unless one indulges the fantasy that Senate floor speeches are attended (like the Philippics of Demosthenes) by throngs of eager listeners, instead of being delivered (like Demosthenes' practice sessions on the beach) alone into a vast emptiness.

On the other hand, the controversy raises an interesting question: If our legislators can treat the Congressional Record as if it were a work of fiction, editing out and adding in what they please, then why shouldn't the rest of us taxpayers demand the same right? Consider the example of Wikipedia, that vast, online compendium of collaborative knowledge, brainchild of Mr. Jimmy Wales, whose guiding principle is that anyone, at any time, should have the right to revise any of the encyclopedia's 4.2 million articles. The numbers talk. The "Wiki Principle" has generated an overwhelming response from an alienated proletar-

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iat—the voiceless millions who have risen up in revolt against the elitist masters of the knowledge industry. What could be more democratic?

Of course, it is true that the "Wiki Principle" is sometimes subject to misuse. Everyone must remember Brian Chase, the 38-year-old middle manager from Nashville, Tennessee, who fabricated an entire biographical entry on John Seigenthaler, former editor of the Nashville *Tennessean*. For 132 days, Chase's libels against Seigenthaler went undetected by the Wikipedia editors, or anyone else. Apparently, Seigenthaler was unhappy to learn that he had for many years collaborated with the Soviet Union and was implicated in the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, for he later expressed his concern about a "new media . . . populated by volunteer vandals with poison-pen intellects."

While I am not without some sympathy for Mr. Seigenthaler, I would argue that, to the contrary, what is needed to liven up the dismal tracts of the Congressional Record is precisely more "volunteer vandals with poison-pen intellects"—armies of them, in fact. As anyone who has actually tried it knows, reading about congressional debates in the Record is, if anything, more mind-numbingly tedious than watching them on C-Span, which itself has all the fascination of watching orangutans grooming themselves at the local zoo. Senators Graham and Kyl, bless their hearts, have taken us a step in the right direction. Imagine how much more participatory American democracy would become if we could all add our two cents, after the fact, to congressional debate. What a sense of empowerment it would generate! What tremendous therapeutic value it would have for all those millions of victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, who could then begin to feel that they are asserting some control over their own destinies! Of course, the Congressional Record would have to go "live" online, while providing enough bandwidth for the purpose, which might prove expensive. If necessary, a small fee might be charged for the opportunity—say, one dollar per hour. Indeed, enough revenue might be raised to make a small dent in the national debt or, better yet, to finance more pork-barrel projects in your home state. In any event, I have undertaken to provide a modest example of how much more edifying the Record might become if ten-dollar-a-haircut proles such as I were provided an opportunity to "emend" and interpolate from the comfort of our own homes, or, if you like, while soaking up the soothing ambient chatter at our local Backyard Burger.

The following excerpt from the Congressional Record is my own emended version of a debate that took place on the Senate floor on May 18, 2006. The topic of debate on this occasion was a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, 2006: "Sec. 162: Preserving and Enhancing the Role of the National Language," an amendment cosponsored by Senators Inhofe, Graham, Kyl, Byrd, and Alexander. After a lengthy apologia for the amendment by Senator Inhofe, Senator Graham is about to speak. The presiding officer is Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The reader will note that emended and interpolated passages have, following the example of Senators Graham and Kyl, been concealed:

The PRESIDING OFFICER: The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM: Mr. President, just to put this debate into perspective for myself and myself alone, I wish that I could speak English. It would make me a better person. The truth is that I know enough English to be dangerous. I lived in Germany for 4½ years and I picked up a little English from my German friends, but I was always somewhat embarrassed that they spoke better English. . . . It would be great for our country if our young people could speak German . . . umm, pardon me, English . . . because we live in a global economy and a global world (*sic*) and speaking English (*sic*) would make our world a better place. . . . When it comes to our nation, it is important that we focus as a nation (*sic*) on learning English. We need to promote that because, whether you are crossing the border as we speak or whether you are (*sic*) born and bred here, your life will be tremendously enhanced by learning to speak English. Opportunities will exist for you that will not exist otherwise. There are many jobs in our dynamic global economy that require some knowledge of English. Though, of course, many of those jobs have been outsourced to places like India where they also speak better English than I do. But I was talking of other jobs, such as . . . well, as far as I know telephone soliciting still requires some English, for there are still places in this great nation where the people still speak English, and if you're trying to sell them a magazine subscription or a condominium then you'd better speak their language!

Mr. BYRD: If I may interrupt my distinguished colleague . . .

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Senator Byrd, you are out of order, sir.

Mr. GRAHAM: That's quite all right, Madam President, I'll happily yield three minutes of my time to the distinguished windbag . . . um, pardon me, distinguished senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD: I thank you, Senator, for yielding me some of your time, and I'll gladly pardon you for that little slip of the tongue. I'm quite aware that I sometimes do tax the patience of my distinguished colleagues here in this noble chamber, this temple of democracy where so many great orators of the past have spoken out on pressing issues of the day, so many masters of the noble tongue of Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, masters of the English tongue, that is, which is the pressing issue of this memorable day, and about which I feel pressed to speak, though three minutes is hardly enough time to begin to marshal my thoughts, thoughts which have sorely vexed my waking hours, because it troubles me mightily to admit that, even in my great state of West Virginia, many Americans no longer speak the Queen's English. Sadly, during my last campaign, I was informed by my aides that I would need an interpreter. Imagine that, my honorable colleagues! Right here in America. Now, I suppose that our people out there in the heartland are speaking some kind of English. Perhaps it's some kind of hip-hop English, some gangsta-rap English. Whatever it is, I can't understand it. I'm too old, I guess. Some might say "old and in the way" . . .

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Senator, your three minutes is about to expire; perhaps you'd better get to the point . . .

Mr. BYRD: Now don't you take that tone with me, young lady! I've been addressing this assembly for over fifty years, and I'll get to my point in my own good time. I'm sure that my honorable colleague from the great state of South Carolina, where they still mind their manners, will yield

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me a few more minutes of his time.

Mr. GRAHAM: Sir, I would very much like to finish . . .

Mr. BYRD: Thank you, Senator. I graciously accept your offer of additional minutes. Now, as I was saying, I may be old and in the way, "but when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw," as the Byrd of Avon has his sweet Prince Hamlet say, ha ha—I meant the bard of Avon, of course. Just a little joke, ladies and gentlemen. What I mean to say is that I wholeheartedly support this amendment to "preserve and enhance the role of the national language," the English language, but I humbly suggest that we give some thought to what we mean by that. I've heard it stated on this floor today that we are going to entrust this job of English preservation to Homeland Security! Now, I ask you, does anyone in that department speak English? Because not a week goes by when I don't receive reams of memos and reports and all manner of classified documents from those people, and not a one of them appears to be written in English. Now, well may you ask, to whom should we entrust this sacred role? To the English professors? Well, as far as I can tell, they stopped speaking English some time ago. To our newscasters and journalists? I'm afraid that most of them never spoke English in the first place! So, as you can see, my distinguished colleagues, though I am proud to be one of the sponsors of this amendment, I believe that we need to proceed with caution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Senator Graham?

Mr. GRAHAM: My thanks to the Senator from West Virginia for his support for this amendment and for his eloquently stated concerns, which we certainly need to address. At the moment, however, I would like to return to my earlier point. The goal of this amendment is to say that English should be the national language. Everyone, whether he be the President of the United States or a migrant picking sugarcane in Louisiana, should learn to speak English. And while I would encourage every American to enroll your (*sic*) kids in taking (*sic*) Spanish or Swahili or Edo or Tagalog or whatever the case may be, because they will be more successful as individuals in a global economy, from a national perspective, it is important that we maintain our common sense of being one nation by massacring . . . uh, mastering the English language. We must be both global and national. We must not abandon our native tongues, but we must master our own tongues . . . um, tongue. I yield to Senator Durbin.

Mr. DURBIN: What troubles me, and I think the Senator from South Carolina is still tied up in knots about it, too, is what happens when a person is here legally in the U.S. but has limited language skills—what happens when that person goes in to vote? What kind of guarantee do we have that that person will be properly instructed in a language they (*sic*) can understand, to vote for the party that best serves their (*sic*) interests? What happens when that person goes into a courtroom? What kind of guarantee can we give that they (*sic*) will be treated fairly?

Mr. GRAHAM: That is a great question. I am glad to answer. As you know, we live in a global economy. Therefore, a variety of government services are provided by law in languages other than English. That decision has been made in the Voting Riot . . . uh, Rights Act. There are a bunch of indecencies—pardon me, incidences (*sic*) in our law that would authorize such a service to be provided.

Mr. DURBIN: May I ask the Senator to yield for a question?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes.

Mr. DURBIN: Can the Senator point to me in (*sic*) a current situation where a government service is being offered and explained in a language other than English—and that is usually the case?

Mr. GRAHAM: Right.

Me. DURBIN: In my home state of Illinois, that language might be Polish . . .

Mr. GRAHAM: Right.

Mr. INHOFE: Will the Senator yield to me so that I can answer this question?

Mr. GRAHAM: Right.

Mr. INHOFE: I would remind the Senator from Illinois that the Court Interpreters Act was passed in 1978. They did not, as (*sic*) that time—there was a problem that (*sic*) corrected. That act protects already existing constitutional rights such as the Sixth Amendment (*sic*), and the Fifth Amendment (*sic*), and the 14th Amendment (*sic*), and Due Process. I believe that takes care of the problem you have.

Mr. DURBIN: I don't know whether to direct my question to the Senator from South Carolina or the Senator from Oklahoma. What is happening on the floor of the Senate is getting dangerously close to a debate . . . And I ask those on C-Span to turn up the volume.

1st C-SPAN VIEWER: Did you hear that, Doris, he says there's going to be a debate. Turn up the volume!

2nd C-SPAN VIEWER: I can't find the remote!

1st C-SPAN VIEWER: Aw, forget it. It's too late.

Mr. GRAHAM: Let's go back to the original answer and incorporate it into the question . . . oh, sorry, I meant the original question, of course . . . What was the question?

Mr. BYRD: Madam President, if I may interrupt . . .

The PRESIDING OFFICER (sighing): Would someone care to yield time to the Senator from West Virginia?

Mr. INHOFE: Madam President, Senator Kennedy had planned to address this body this morning, but hasn't yet arrived. I don't think he would object to yielding three minutes to Senator Byrd.

The PRESIDING OFFICER: What seems to be the cause of Senator Kennedy's delay, Mr. Inhofe?

Mr. INHOFE: I believe that he was detained in the cloakroom, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER: I see. Senator Byrd, you may take three minutes.

Mr. BYRD: Speaking of interpreters, Madam President, and with all due respect to this august assemblage, it seems to me that what we are hearing today is a part of the problem. To put it bluntly, I can't understand a damn thing my distinguished colleagues are saying. I propose that we need to attach a rider to this

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amendment, to the effect that English only shall be spoken on the Senate floor. What a sad commentary this is. What has befallen the transcendent tongue of Shakespeare and Milton? Where is the poetry, I ask you? That's what we need. That's what the American people need: poetry! Why, when I was a poor boy of seventeen I worked, as many of you know, in a slaughterhouse. As you can well imagine, that was not a pleasant occupation. But I made it pleasant and uplifting by memorizing poetry by night—by the light of a kerosene lantern, mind you—so that I could recite what I had learned as I toiled on the floor of that slaughterhouse. Now here I stand on another floor, and what do I find? I find the English language slaughtered, drawn, and quartered! I am grateful that Billy Byrd did not live to witness this. I'm speaking of Billy, my beloved old dog, course. Many of you have heard me speak of him before. Billy was a lover of poetry. Many a night, I recited Milton to him as he lay at my feet before the fire. *Paradise Lost* was one of his particular favorites. But he was especially fond of limericks. Now, I like a good limerick myself. A man and his dog can't live by blank verse alone. No, indeed. I remember one limerick that used to set Billy Byrd's tail a waggin'! Now, let me see. How did it go? Oh, yes,

"There was a young belle of old
Natchez
Whose garments were always in
patchez.
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes,
She drawled, When Ah itchez, Ah
scratchez."

"When Ah itchez, Ah scratchez," ha ha, that's the part that Billy liked the most . . . Ah, yes, I do miss old Billy. Sometimes of a night, I just don't know what to do with myself . . .

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Senator, your three minutes have expired.

Mr. BYRD: "The sun like a Bishop's bottom / Rosy and round and hot / Looked down upon us who shot 'em / And down on the devils we shot. / And the stink of the damned dead . . . "

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Senator! That will be quite enough! Will someone see that Mr. Byrd is returned safely to his office? Now, I see that Senator Kennedy has found his way out of the cloakroom. Senator, I believe you have something to say about this amendment?

Mr. KENNEDY: Ahem . . . Madam President, my esteemed colleagues, it is my understanding that this amendment alters no existing law and is merely a statement of policy, an affirmation that we should all, if possible, learn to speak English. In short, this is an amendment which is perfectly harmless. Have I understood correctly, Senator Graham?

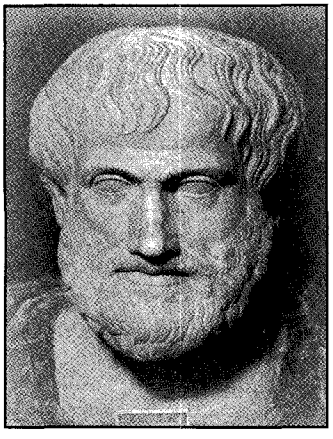
Mr. GRAHAM: Right.

Mr. KENNEDY: Then, speaking for the people of the great state of Massachusetts, I give it my wholehearted support.

The PRESIDING OFFICER: Is there any further comment? None? Then let us proceed to a vote. All in favor? All opposed? The ayes have it. The vote is unanimous. Let it be so recorded.

1st C-SPAN VIEWER: My, that was exciting. Is *Oprah* still on?

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.



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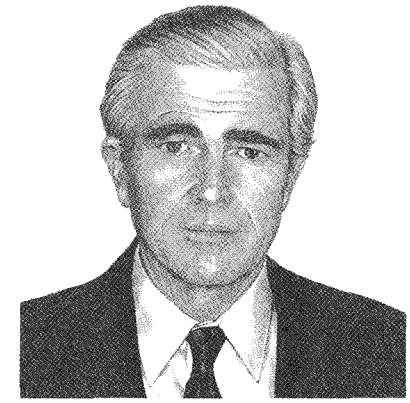
by George McCartney

Astray From the Fold



The Good Shepherd
Produced and distributed by Universal Pictures
Directed by Robert De Niro
Screenplay by Eric Roth

Call me slow, but I had to see *The Good Shepherd* twice to figure out what was going on. Truth to tell, I'm still not entirely sure what this dour, 167-minute CIA drama wants to say. Its elliptical, time-shuttling presentation purports to be an account of the founding and growth of the Central Intelligence Agency as a WASP redoubt seen through the eyes of a fictional operative, one Edward Wilson (played by Matt Damon doing a locked-jaw impression of WASP rectitude).

To tell their story, screenwriter Eric Roth and director Robert De Niro have devised a narrative that holds its secrets almost as closely as the boys at Langley clutch theirs. The film doles out gen on a stingy need-to-know basis that rarely gives viewers what they need to know. Why Roth and De Niro thought such stealth necessary is puzzling. Maybe their Byzantine plot and hefty lacunae constitute an exercise in form following devious content: To dramatize a profession given to manipulative deception, they decided to give the audience firsthand experience by running them down one misleading alley after another. Or were they just distracting us from the project's overall shakiness?

The film's first deceptive feint is Wilson himself, who is not so fictional after all. He is a composite character based on at least two of the agency's semifamous—some would say wholly infamous—members, James Jesus Angleton and Richard Bissell. This being a politically correct project, the film chooses to overlook the men's achievements and focuses, instead, on their failures. Through Wilson, we're reminded that, as the deputy director of counterintelligence, Angleton came under the spell of a Russian defector who led him into a raging obsession with moles in the CIA. He began to distrust nearly all of his colleagues, at least one director, and, reaching higher, a president or two. His paranoia eroded CIA morale so thoroughly that operatives stopped recruiting agents from behind the Iron Curtain for fear that Angleton would suspect them of double-dealing on behalf of the enemy. From Bissell's dossier, we are shown that, as deputy director of operations, he misjudged the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and failed to cleanse the world of Fidel Castro. We are left to understand that someone inside the agency tipped Castro off. This may be true, but, curiously, nothing is said of President John F. Kennedy's feet suffering hypothermia at the 11th-hour, an affliction the stalwart Commander in Chief relieved by canceling the full air support he had promised the invading exile force. I wonder, does Roth vote Democratic?

Storytellers have the right to pick and choose as they please, but it seems mean-spirited not to acknowledge that, as an agent in the CIA's original incarnation, the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), Angleton successfully foiled Nazi plans during World War II. Instead, Wilson-Angleton is shown in Berlin after the war, recruiting Nazi scientists to work for America. Shocking. (You may not have known, but all German scientists *ipso facto* were Nazis. That's because they were German.) Nor do we hear anything of Angleton's ability to divine Soviet intentions after the war, at least through the 1960's. Bissell is similarly served. For instance, his work in developing the U-2 spyplane does not rate a single reference despite the fact that the high-tech aircraft provided invaluable information, including the news that the Soviets were nowhere near as well armed with missiles as we were in the late 1950's and early 60's. This meant, of course, that JFK's relentless charges that Eisenhower's incompetence had left America with an alarming "missile gap" had as much reality as George Bush's weapons of mass destruction. Of course, Roth and De Niro might argue that they were not making *roman à clef* and, therefore, were not under any obligation to replicate the facts of Angleton's and Bissell's careers in the character of Wilson. There is, however, a caveat here. When one chooses to "borrow" the lives of the principal men involved in historical events, there seems to me an obligation to present them whole. Yes, fiction is not history, but to come so close to the facts and then veer so widely seems at the very least willfully misleading. And, while the CIA has much to answer for, keeping mum about its record of protecting American interests is clearly an ideological, rather than dramatic, choice.

Perhaps Roth felt such lapses would be of little consequence, since his film is not, after all, principally concerned with the CIA. He has taken the agency's history as a useful occasion to achieve his real purpose of exposing a dangerously corrupting influence in America: WASP entitlement. This is made clear when, shortly after the failed Bay of Pigs operation, Wilson bribes a member of the Mafia (based on Sam Giancana) with an offer of immunity from prosecution should he agree to arrange Fidel Castro's assassination. (By the way, shorn from the final cut is that unimportant detail about Giancana being Kennedy's goombah pander.) At once amused and angered by Wilson's cavalier hypocrisy, the mafioso (Joe Pesci, in a patented performance) tries to needle the college-boy operative. "Let me ask you something," he begins slyly. "We Italians, we got our families and we got the Church; the Irish, they have their homeland; Jews their tradition; even the niggas, they got their music. What about you people, Mr. Wilson—what do you have?"

In a level voice, Wilson replies, "We have the United States of America. The rest of you are just visiting." It's perhaps the one humorous line in this otherwise dankly solemn film, and it is made all the funnier by Damon's delivery, which is conspicuously uninflected by emotion or irony. Of course, a self-respecting WASP would never utter such a sentiment in earshot of the unwashed. But it

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is dramatically permissible here, because he certainly would have thought it, especially in 1961.

This is where Roth's real theme lies, and it provides whatever dramatic energy the film possesses. He has targeted America's officially unacknowledged ethnic and class divisions. When the character based on the CIA's founder, Wild Bill Donovan (played by De Niro in a nicely turned avuncular fashion), invites Wilson to join his fledgling organization after the war, he explains that the agency will enlist only the unquestionably patriotic. "That means," he confides, "no Jews, blacks, and very few Catholics." The papists get a conditional pass because, he acknowledges with a good-fellow smile, "I'm a Catholic." In other words, from its inception, the CIA was an exclusive club, an aristocratic corps composed of intellectuals, amateurs, and dandies hailing from the Ivy League, especially Yale. In early scenes, Wilson is shown at Yale being inducted into Skull and Bones, the university's ultrasecret fraternity, which is presented as a veritable seminary of the power elite. This can hardly be disputed, since it counts among its members our current President and his father, along with such other luminaries as John Kerry and numerous CEOs, big-time lawyers, and even a prestige scientist or two.

Wilson, then, is presented as an individual slated for spying by privilege and experience. In a word, he grows up to be a natural snitch on behalf of his own class. That is, after all, what hunting those commies was all about: protecting the wealthy. As a Yale Bonesman, he's encouraged to think himself one of those chosen by fate to run the world. But this august privilege comes at a cost. If he is to run the world at large, he must allow his own little world to run him. He becomes completely obedient to the WASP expectations imposed on him by his peers and elders. His Skull and Bones initiation requires him to mud wrestle with the other initiates naked. While they do so, a Bonesman pisses on him from the balcony above. Outraged by this humiliation, Wilson threatens to quit in the middle of his rite of passage but then allows the pisser to talk him out of doing so, thus foreclosing what will be one of his few bids for independence. The pisser herds him back into the fold by rehearsing all the seductive benefits of membership—most of all, the access to power it will confer. What a pisser! Soon afterward, an FBI agent asks him to report on his homosexual literature professor, a man suspected of Nazi sympathies. Wilson bridles at this: "Are you asking me to become a spy?"

Without missing a beat, the agent plays upon his Protestant sense of duty. "I'm asking you to be a good citizen." Wilson cannot resist this call to arms, and soon, he's handing over the goods on the professor. Later, he reluctantly submits to the advances of a senator's daughter (Angelina Jolie, playing to type) and then finds himself drafted into marrying this reckless wanton when their one encounter leaves her pregnant.

Wilson is portrayed as a passive personality easily manipulated into doing his duty serving the state and his class peers. He shows virtually no initiative. Yet we are to believe that he somehow becomes the head of the CIA's counterintelligence. This is flatly absurd. A counterintelligence agent may be half-mad and wholly alcoholic (as Angleton seems to have been), but what he cannot be is a passive conformist, acting only when directed by superiors. The job is too unpredictable for such anemic self-assertion. But Roth is intent on making of Wilson, the number-two man in the CIA, a conscienceless, just-follow-orders man: in short, an American version of a Nazi functionary, a faceless automaton coldly plotting, torturing, and murdering for the good of the state. This is why we are treated to so many shots of Damon, dressed in his tan raincoat and olive-gray fedora, stepping onto his morning bus in Washington, D.C., with a virtual platoon of identically garbed commuters. Oh, the soul-destroying conformity of it all! Those hollow WASPs!

Needless to say, the film is also intent on portraying the CIA as an agency gone dangerously rotten because it operates without much, if any, oversight. At various points, agents sneeringly refer to this concern as typical fodder for editorialists. How, they rejoin, can you watch the watchdog? Roth portrays Bill Donovan as a good man who foresaw this difficulty but never solved it. Wilson also has the makings of a good man, but he is inevitably corrupted by the CIA's unmonitored world of double-dealing and finds himself behaving heinously, even murderously at times. Then, after 20 years of suspecting everyone else, he's left with only one suspect unaccounted for: the fellow he finds in his mirror—a good shepherd by official criteria perhaps, but hardly so measured in the light of his Gospel forerunner.

This irony could have become the centerpiece of a timely study of how good intentions can be perverted when patriotic expedience rules the day. But Roth is too obsessed by his hatred of the WASP to see straight. He is more interested in taking revenge on members of the upper class than understanding them. Well, I suppose WASPs could use a bit of vindictive oversight. We only have to consider the Bushes, the Cheneys, the Rockefellers . . . but why go on? Class differences have always been with us. There is always some group on top trying to make themselves feel superior with their rituals and clubs, their exclusivity and clothes, their sense of entitlement, their insulting *noblesse oblige*. Such is the human condition, and, in the long view, it's endlessly, hopelessly silly. Spleen such as Roth's will never change it.

That said, Roth and De Niro's film is not without merit. It does well on the personal level, depicting—as Roth put it in an interview—"the disappearance of a soul." Wilson submits so completely to the ruthless requirements of his social order that, finally, there is little left of his own person. Clearly, this happens and deserves our appalled sympathy. The film also does a fine job of recreating the look and feel of the period in London, Berlin, and Washington. And Wilson's college romance with a deaf girl is poignantly realized. In retrospect, he comes to realize dimly that, had he not succumbed to the senator's importunate daughter, a siren of the establishment, he might have had a chance for decency and self-respect with a woman who literally does not listen to the counsels of the entitled world. ◁▷

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Daughter and Lover

For days after the meeting with Bro. Billy Joe, Héctor was too angry to communicate with his wife other than in monosyllables. During most of this period, the reason for his anger eluded him. It was not until the third or fourth day that he understood the cause of his distress. Whether the kid Abdul converted to Christianity or not, Héctor Villa did not want his daughter taking up romantically with an Afghan—period. And he couldn't comprehend how AveMaría could want such a thing, let alone act as a facilitator of it. Though he was angry with the preacher as well, Héctor tried to be fair: The man's job, after all, was saving souls; AveMaría's was to see that their daughter was properly brought up to make a suitable marriage, at the appropriate time and with the right sort of man—which, in Héctor's view, definitely did not include bearded Central Asians in turbans who rode camels and herded goats back home, while covertly keeping Osama bin Laden and his Qaeda supplied with food, weapons, and (so he understood from a reliable source) a steady stream of voluptuous virgins from Pakistan.

Héctor knew enough popular psychology to understand that *facilitator* is an unpleasant term for a nasty thing. But he couldn't think of another word to describe his wife's behavior in welcoming Abdul in every afternoon, after he'd delivered Contracepción to the house, for cookies and milk. (Though only fifteen, Abdul carried an official-looking laminated driver's license identifying him as being sixteen years of age.) Since the first afternoon, when the boy had made known his preference for goat's milk over cow's, AveMaría had taken care to keep a half-gallon of the wretched stuff on hand in the refrigerator. The children ate their snack in the kitchen to allow the Señora Villa to keep them under her watchful eye. The kitchen was the one room in the house devoid of a crucifix, thus sparing AveMaría the trouble of veiling the Lord Jesus from Abdul's gaze with a handkerchief, as the young Islamist piously insisted she do. (When her husband pointed out a certain inconsistency between converting the boy to Christ and removing from his gaze the central symbol of His religion, AveMaría had countered with the argument that, before Adbul could open his heart to Jesus, he needed to be set at ease and made to feel comfortable and at home.) Promptly at six, Contracepción walked her young man out to the car, where, furtively observed by AveMaría, Abdul took formal leave of her before driving off. Her heart aflutter as she watched the affecting scene from behind a curtain in the sitting room, the expectant mother hardly knew whether to be reassured or disappointed when he failed to kiss the girl. How had Jesús "Eddie" got the notion that the couple went joyriding about town, passionately necking behind the wheel? Not for the first time, AveMaría wondered whether Jesús "Eddie" might have a dirty mind.

After Contracep and Abdul had been "going together," as AveMaría phrased the situation for herself, for two weeks, she decided to let Teresa Aguilar in on the romance. After all (she reasoned), the relationship, having behind it the honorable Christian purpose of salvation, could hardly be called a pagan one—not even by a devout member of the Roman Catholic Church, which AveMaría recalled from her girlhood as unpleasantly judgmental and irrational. Though only four or five years her senior, Teresa herself had seven children, the first two of whom were grown and married already with children of their own, while the second-youngest—Castidad, a year older than Contracepción—certainly didn't look like a girl who'd ever been kissed by a boy. AveMaría was not given to boasting, and she certainly had never been one to take pleasure in making someone else feel envy. Still (she couldn't help thinking), Teresa was bound to be impressed by Contracep's success with a serious young man of Christian intention—perhaps to the point even of giving poor Castidad a nudge in that direction herself! You just never knew, AveMaría reflected, how sharing an inspirational story with someone could change that person's whole life, and perhaps the lives of many others as well. And, naturally, what goes around, comes around. The life you save may be your own!

AveMaría called her friend late one morning when Héctor was away on a job in Quemado, after she'd dropped Contracepción at the mosque. (For some reason Abdul never offered to drive her *to*, only *from*, work. She must ask her daughter about this sometime, AveMaría reminded herself.) Teresa Aguilar picked up on the fifth ring, just as AveMaría was about to hang up so as to forestall the answering machine playing the introductory bars of Franck's "Panis Angelicus." It was her turn to host the Catholic reading group, Teresa explained; this week, they were considering *The Exorcist*, in Spanish translation. Teresa promised to phone back in fifteen minutes after the girls had gone, and AveMaría sat in her favorite armchair with the phone in her hand, awaiting the call and treasuring in her heart the miracle of love between her daughter and Abdul Agha, the Afghan boy.

When, at last, the telephone did ring, she fumbled and nearly dropped it in her excitement.

"*¡Diga!*"

"*¡Oiga!*" The voice was, indeed, Teresa's. "Finally, we can talk. I thought the girls never would leave! We get together to discuss the Great Catholic Books, and all they want to talk about is their husbands. But what's up with you, AveMaría? You sounded as if you'd won the lottery a half-hour ago."

"Oh, nothing much." AveMaría was doing her best to sound casual. "Héctor's gone for the day, so I did a little shopping at the mall, just a few odds and ends, including a gorgeous Donna Karan suit I found on sale—in case Héctor decides to run for office again, you know. And Dubya's been talking a blue streak all week—something he must have learned from the neighbor's parrot, I can't understand a word!" She paused, casting about for more trivia in the attic of her mind and

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not finding any. "Oh, I almost forgot to mention: Contracep has an admirer, her very first—isn't that sweet! Fifteen years old and such a *guapo*, too! You know, Teresa, if I was ten years younger—and didn't have Héctor, of course—I think I'd be halfway interested myself."

Teresa's voice sounded dubious, and perhaps a little cold. "Your girl's just thirteen, isn't she? Don't you think that's a little young for . . . that sort of thing?" Teresa always avoided speaking the name "Contracepción," whenever politeness allowed.

"She'll be fourteen in August. And they've never even kissed, they're so content just to be together! You remember, Contracep had a little . . . problem at school last fall. Me and her father feel sure her relationship with Abdul is going to be a real learning experience for her, one that helps her find maturity by discovering herself—" In her enthusiasm, AveMaría had revealed more than she'd intended to tell her friend at the outset. Confused, she broke off in mid-sentence, searching for a way to cover her tracks, and found it already too late for that.

"His name is Abdul?" Teresa spoke in the voice she might have used had the name been immediately preceded by the title of "Pope."

"Well, yes. His family happen to be immigrants from Afghanistan, you see. Very hard working, doing the kind of jobs Americans won't—"

"They're *Muslims*, then?"

"Oh, Abdul's promised Contracep to convert! Everything's being arranged by Brother Billy Joe. It's going to be a nationwide story, Billy Joe says."

"AveMaría, are you and your husband *locos*? First, you abandon Holy Mother Church for a *gringo* circus tent, now you encourage your daughter to become involved with a follower of the Prince of Lies, a member of the Devil's Own Religion that teaches Our Lord is boiling alive in a pot of hot oil this very moment! Not to mention, she's only thirteen. Next thing I hear, you'll have found a girlfriend for Dubya. Listen to me, *querida*! Us *Méxicanos* up here in the *Estados Unidos* need to become *Norteños* in our pocketbooks, not in our heads."

The conversation was not going at all the way AveMaría had imagined it. By turns surprised, aggrieved, and resentful at her friend's reprimand, she felt in the end abashed, even slightly guilty. Of course Teresa, not being intimately familiar with either the peculiarities of the situation or the characters involved, couldn't help but view the entire business from a distance, as it were. Even so, her admonition against thinking too much like an American struck home. How often, AveMaría thought, had she herself, observing the same tendency in her husband, warned him against it? In his determination to become a real American, Héctor was far more obsessive than she. True, America was for Mexicans the Promised Land, but only for so long as they remained Mexican at heart. To that extent, she found herself in reluctant agreement with Teresa Aguilar. If Anglo parents, worshiping diversity as Americans did, were content to see their children marry Islamists, that was their business. Clearly, a Mexican mother could never consent to such a thing for her child. But Abdul Agha was going to become a Christian himself, first! As for the rest of it—regarding the propriety of Contracep's having a boyfriend at all—that was just Teresa's outdated, restrictive, and superstitious religion talking. It was too bad, AveMaría considered, that her best friend had to be what Bro. Billy Joe called a Mackerel Snapper (and worse), but what was she to do about that? Only the week before, she'd considered discreetly inviting Teresa to join her for the prayer meeting that was meant to kick off the Crusade for Souls. Now, as a result of this conversation, it appeared to her prudent to postpone all evangelistic efforts until such time as Teresa Aguilar seemed more receptive to God's Call.

Therefore, all AveMaría said in answer to her friend's outburst was, "Well, in America, do as the *Americanos* do, ha ha! Héctor and I want to throw a party for Abdul when he's saved, I'll call to let you know when we have a date to invite you, we hope you and Augustín will come—oh, and Castidad too, of course, if she wants to and has nothing better to do. Who knows; she might even meet *someone nice* there!"

That evening, Abdul, after dropping Contracepción at the gate, drove off at once without coming inside for cookies and milk. AveMaría, surprised and fearing a lovers' quarrel, asked why.

"Oh, *Mamá*, it's Friday and he has evening prayer service to go to. His father is the *Ihop*, so he can't skip church or be a minute late, even."

AveMaría, who had no idea what an *Ihop* might be, nodded sagely and said nothing. An hour later, after her husband had arrived home and the two of them were seated together in the den watching the six o'clock news, she asked him about it during the commercial break.

"An *Ihop*? No idea. Sounds like a pancake house to me."

"It's something to do with the mosque. Contracep says Abdul's father is the *Ihop* there. And it's pronounced '*Ih-Hop*,' not '*Eye-hop*,' by the way."

Even had he not made it a matter of patriotic duty for the past five years to follow developments in the War on Terror conscientiously, the televised interview from Baghdad that had concluded just before the break would have supplied Héctor with the answer. He hit the MUTE button on the remote and set his dripping beer bottle down on the coffee table without bothering to place a coaster under it.

"*Imam*!" he exclaimed in a harsh whisper to his wife. "The word is *imam*, meaning an Islamist priest! This fellow's father is the . . . uh . . . pastor of the Belen mosque, the head *gazzink*! Do you have any idea what this means, woman?"

AveMaría hesitated before giving an answer that to her seemed so obvious she had to imagine her husband's question was really a trick one.

"Why, I suppose he's just the same as Brother Billy Joe in our church," she said at last. "Just stick a coaster under that bottle—*¡por favor, querido!*"

Héctor regarded her momentarily with hopeless despair. Then, he put his open hand to his forehead and ran it down his face as far as his chin. When he had done so, his expression was changed entirely, as if the despairing one had been wiped away and replaced by a look of determined aggression.

"A so-called mosque is nothing but a terrorist cell," he began, "and the *imam* is the head terrorist. Do you see now what it is that you have done, AveMaría? Through your crazy desire to find Contracepción a *novio*, you have invited a dangerous viper into the bosom of the family!"

AveMaría at first was too shocked and ashamed to speak. Slowly, however, she became emboldened, her conversation with Teresa Aguilar that afternoon having encouraged in her a strange and unaccustomed confidence.

"In that case," she said in a strong voice, rising from the sofa beside her husband, "we must see that Abdul gets saved as soon as possible. *Gracias a Dio*, the Crusade for Souls begins just two weeks from tomorrow!"

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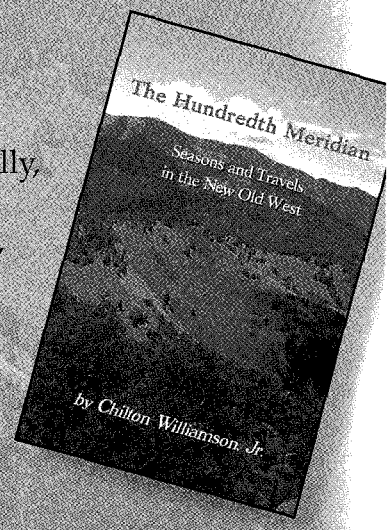

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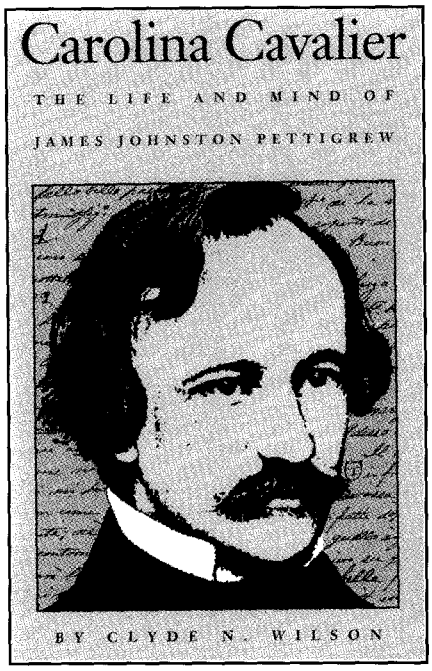

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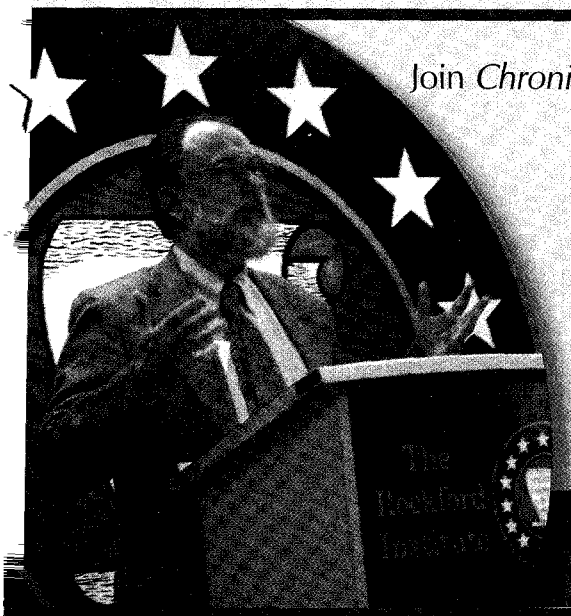

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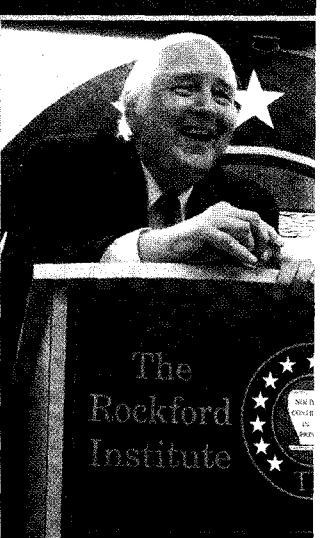

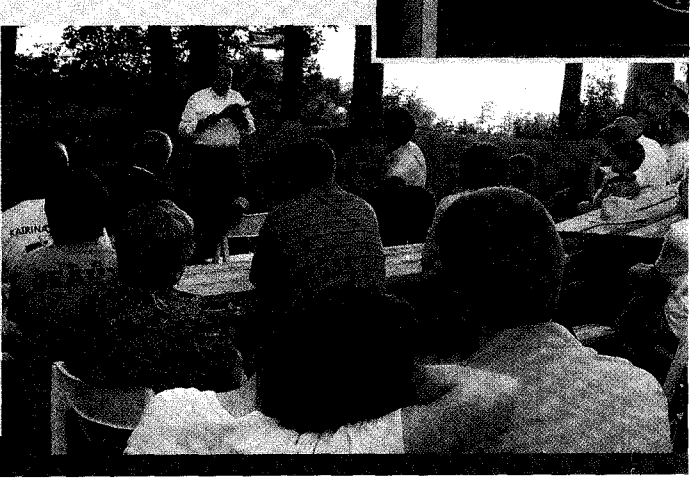

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